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JAMES WOODFORD,

CARPENTER AND CHARTIST.

BY

HENRY SOLLY,

AUTHOR OF "WORKING MEN'S CLUBS AND INSTITUTES," "THE
SHEPHERD'S DREAM," "GONZAGA: A TALE OF FLORENCE,"

ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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251. I. 340

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

TO

J. R. SEELEY, M.A.,

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF MODERN HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF CAMBRIDGE.

DEAR MR. SEELEY,

THE following pages, I regret to say, are the best, or at all events the only answer I can give to a request you once made me that I should write an historical sketch of the Chartist movement from my own personal recollections. Though I cannot offer you what you asked for, I think "James Woodford" practically supplies an important part of the historical links you desire; and I can only hope you and others will accept them "for better, for worse," though they may be by no means better but decidedly worse than you expected.

I am aware that you object to mingling history and fiction. You urge that, of course, history is of no use unless so far as we can rely on its accuracy. But in the present case I can guarantee the historic truth of all the portions of Woodford's narrative relating to public events and public characters. You may accept them with entire confidence. While as regards the mingling with history, private biography and adventures (whether real or fictitious), you will forgive me for holding to my belief that the additional

vividness and *reality* thereby given to the facts and lessons of history, far outweighs the drawback of a want of absolute accuracy with regard to the private narrative. But I fully admit that such historic fiction, or semi-fiction, should be given to the world, not as a substitute for the regular historic record, but only as an addition.

Apart, however, from any slight historical value the following "recollections" of a Chartist carpenter and joiner may possess, I think they may have a certain special value, at the present time, to those persons (a numerous class) who desire to be of use to the great industrial classes of this kingdom. For they accurately describe what various workmen of the past and present generation think and feel on many important points vitally affecting the welfare of the whole community. Without pledging myself as to all the details of Woodford's personal narrative, I can vouch for its truth as representing, with complete fidelity, the views and modes of thought of large numbers of operatives in regard to those topics; and I have reason to know that working men, generally, would accept it as, on the whole, a thoroughly faithful picture of what it professes to describe. This is the more important because the relations of employer and employed, of "the governing classes" to the lower strata of society, and even of workmen to one another, with all matters relating to working men's organizations—their wants, temptations, hardships, difficulties, and sins—have, for the most part, hitherto been treated of by members of the upper classes, or from an upper-class point of view. Yet it surely is essential for the general welfare, that social and political questions should be viewed from the workman's standpoint also.

The lion's remark to Æsop, though trite, had a good deal of force in it, and the sculptured group would, no doubt, have been differently arranged had the lion himself been the sculptor. It is high time to recognize the fact that the views of working men with regard to what they want, think, and suffer, must be told by themselves, or by those who have lived among them and thoroughly understand them. Weekly-wage artizans (and labourers also, but we are not now concerned with them,) live under conditions and influences so peculiar to themselves, that persons in other ranks of society, as a general rule, are as unable adequately to understand and describe them as the most gifted Englishman would be to accurately comprehend and describe North American Indians, or the Japanese, without having resided among them. A remark made some time since by a Lancashire mill-hand to a number of his mates assembled to consider certain proposals intended for their benefit, may be an apology for the part I have taken in this publication :—"Thae gentlefolk knaw nowt about us—'cept Solly—he do knaw summut." Yet if the middle and "governing classes" are to do justly by their working-class brethren, and promote the true interests of the whole community, they must, in some way or other, learn to understand them. The motto of our recent attempt to promote "The Common Good" by journalism, you recognized, I think, as a sound one. "Sympathy" does depend "on Knowledge, and Progress on Light and Love," whatever else may be needful also.

But there is another and no less important reason for publishing these recollections of "Jem Woodford's." Many of the men who struggled forty years ago to

carry "The People's Charter" were among that "noble army of martyrs" who, in various epochs and countries, have striven, at severe cost, to advance the social and political condition of the great masses of the people. They were the pioneers, in evil days and often under terrible penalties, of those important reforms, most of which have since been, or shortly will be, carried into effect amid the applause of senates, and the triumphant approval alike of Conservatives and Liberals, of dukes and artisans.¹ The lessons which their efforts give, both by failure and success—the example or the warning which the leaders and their followers in the Chartist agitation bequeath to their descendants, according to the wisdom or folly, the self-sacrificing patriotism or grasping greed, they displayed,—ought not, as you truly urge, to be wholly lost or forgotten. Englishmen, to judge by many recent signs, never needed such lessons more than at the present day, if England's real honour and welfare are to be wisely cherished and permanently maintained.

In your caustic letter, printed in *Macmillan's Magazine* (June 1877),² you showed how deeply you feel the importance of diffusing that particular kind of education which would enable our citizens of every rank to exercise wisely political power. Foremost in that education you class (I think most rightly) historical knowledge, especially a knowledge of recent history. No man has a better right than yourself to urge its importance, and not merely on account of your own historical writings, which, however, I venture to think

¹ Note William Lovett's letter in the Appendix. ² Reprinted in the Prospectus of "The Workmen's Social and Political Education League," of which Professor Seeley is the President.

are "a possession for ever." The comparative neglect of such studies, until very recently, alike in our schools and universities, has been productive of serious evils—especially in the sphere of politics. Hence the incalculable value of your successful efforts to gain due recognition of the worth of these studies at the headquarters of our national education (for Oxford is following the example, in this direction, of Cambridge).

I may, indeed, myself have ventured to believe that in giving courses of historical lectures to working men, which are to extend over several sessions, as I attempted to do at the Artizans' Institute, it is better to begin with the Roman Republic, with "Alfred the Great," or "Charlemagne," than with the present century, because it seems to me we cannot understand the Present unless we comprehend the Past. I may have replied to your arguments for a different method by urging the value of expounding the great fundamental phenomena and institutions from which our modern civilization took its rise—or by contending that experiments in politics which have closed, are worth more as political lessons than those which are still uncompleted. But I never doubted the force of your arguments on behalf of an earnest study, at one time or other, of the historical phenomena and political institutions of the present age. And there is certainly no room to doubt the value of studying the story of William Lovett's political, social, and educational aims, with those of his fellow-workers, of what they did to carry those aims into execution, and of how they were treated while doing it. His very interesting autobiography³ throws much useful light both on

³ "The Life and Struggles of William Lovett, in his pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom." Trübner and Co. 1876.

the value of your own aims and on the means you have recently adopted, by the help of the "Education League," for promoting political education of the people through their social and political clubs.

No man, in his day, saw more clearly, or contended more earnestly, than William Lovett, that if men are to be really free citizens of any community, they must be both honest and educated—not merely honest as regards not stealing, nor educated simply in the three R's; but honest as feeling that the vote is a solemn trust, and educated by discussion with thoughtful men of different parties, by reading wise books, hearing good lectures, and by studying generally, as far as their opportunities permit, history, political philosophy, and social economy. No man, in short, at that time knew better or preached more strenuously than Lovett, that citizens have duties as well as rights, and that unless we perform faithfully and wisely the one, we shall soon lose the other. Feargus O'Connor was at the opposite point of this compass.

But another great lesson is taught us all, I think, by Lovett's career, which he could not so well preach himself, but which was never more wanted, perhaps, than at the present day—viz., *that men will always have leaders like themselves*, not so much because they *make* their leaders (though this is true to a certain extent), but because they *naturally* follow those who resemble themselves on a larger or grander scale. I suppose we reap what we have sown in that as in other matters. History, as well as our own experience, shows us that there are always men of energy aspiring to lead their fellows, and that, in proportion, as the multitude have anything wise or noble

in themselves, they will admire and follow those who are noble, unselfish, wise, and good. So far as they allow themselves to be mean, grasping, thoughtless, self-indulgent, they will inevitably become the followers, dupes, and possibly tools, of greedy, ambitious, vain, and selfish men. And will not one main root of all the mischief thus caused, be found in those miserable jealousies and shameful backbitings whereof Woodford speaks so indignantly in his recollections? For these are practices to which, unhappily, many give way who believe themselves to be thoroughly respectable members of society, but who forget the Ninth Commandment, and one or two others also, in their anxiety to undermine a rival, and give themselves, or their party, a lift to power, whether in social or political movements.

The Socialists of forty years ago, inspired by an earnest and most benevolent Reformer, Robert Owen, believed that the only thing required for the happiness and perfection of the human race, was a change in men's outward circumstances. Given suitable surroundings from infancy to death, and all would be harmony, peace, and joy. Those surroundings they expected, apparently, to obtain simply by improved social conditions, without troubling themselves much about political reform, and still less about religious convictions. The history of their movement has been, to some extent, set forth in an interesting work by G. J. Holyoake,⁴ and we are not concerned with it in the following pages.

The *Chartists* of forty years ago, however, said that the first thing to be done for the salvation of the

⁴ "The History of Co-operation." by G. J. Holyoake. Trübner and Co., London.

state, was to give the whole people a voice in making the laws they were called on to obey, and that then all other desirable changes would follow. Many others believed that if the Charter were passed every wrong would then be righted, and the wants of every household supplied. Some worshipped the Charter as an end in itself. A few, with Lovett at their head, knowing it was only a means to an end, strove to get the people so worthily trained and educated that they would make a wise use of political power when they should obtain it. Perhaps none of them, not even Lovett himself, believed that there was much to be learned from the Tories, or even Whigs, of the day—believed rather that political truth and wisdom were to be found exclusively in their own ranks and their own views. Of course it is not easy for any earnest man to realize the fact that no sect, party, or individual, has all the truth on any subject—that each has only a fragment of that truth, and that each therefore is necessary to its opponent. Yet is it not the fact which, at the present time, pre-eminently needs recognition? I have dwelt elsewhere, briefly, on this subject,⁵ and have adverted to the “burning questions” which are sure to come up for solution before very long, when the nation may be in no peaceful mood for their discussion. Now it would be great presumption on my part to attempt offering any answer to those questions, at all events in a letter to you. But there is no presumption in endeavouring to learn, or even to teach, some of the lessons of experience handed down in history. And of this, I believe, we may be well assured, that if those questions are urged forward by any party or its leaders, as Feargus O'Connor

⁵ “Party Politics and Political Education.” Stanford: Charing Cross.

sought to carry the Charter, or if attempts are made to smother them by what has been termed "Jingoism" or "Fireworks"—by appeals, in short, to vulgar passions and mob violence, instead of to reason and unselfish patriotism—if either from jealousy, ambition, self-will, or unworthy fear, the best and wisest men of any party are driven from its ranks; if newspapers are bought or bribed for private or corrupt purposes; if public meetings are disturbed by noisy antagonists or rowdy roughs; if the people place childish and unreasoning confidence either in newspapers or personal leaders—if, in short, any party in the true spirit of O'Connor's coarse but outspoken exclamation at the Bath meeting ("D——n the people's education!")⁶ succeed in shutting out political light, that they may do "the works of political darkness," it requires little foresight, I think, to perceive that a great and terrible catastrophe is inevitable. Captain Swing's burning ricks, Newport Insurrections, the riots of the "Sacred Month," Kennington Common 10th of April gatherings, and Orange-street conspiracies, may be noted by some future historian as mere child's play, compared with the troubles in store for this nation. The men who rouse brute passions, and violate the rights of public meeting, or gather excited mobs to compass their private or party ends, may quasi-valiantly head those mobs like John Frost, or sneakingly slink out of danger like Feargus O'Connor; but, in either case, mischief may be done in a day which a quarter of a century could not repair. The forces now at the command both of the ruling classes and of the toiling multitudes are so much vaster, the accumulations of property so much greater, the relations of credit and capital so much

⁶ Vol. i. p. 147.

more complicated and delicate, that it would be madness to let the country drift into serious social or political quarrels concerning the great questions of the age, instead of using every available means for ensuring them thoughtful discussion and an equitable settlement, by means of systematic political education. True, the Chartist agitation teaches the multitude (and it will be well for them and for all if they will learn the lesson) the folly as well as the wickedness of attempting to accomplish their objects by mob violence, or any kind of physical force. Yet many of the honest as well as designing Chartist orators felt they might, and did, make eloquent appeals to the people, in the spirit of Campbell's stirring lines:—

“Men of England, who inherit
Rights that cost your sires their blood—
Men whose undegenerate spirit
Has been proved on land and flood. . . .” &c.

And are we to assert, without qualification, that all political reformers must in every case be condemned if they make such appeals to the people? Is it not true that there have been periods in the history of this country when English liberties could only have been secured at the cost of English blood? No one knows it better than yourself. But you would also remind us that happily in those days the Crown possessed no large standing armies, and that the people could not then secure their rights by the ballot-box, by registration, and political clubs. Should there unhappily come a time, however, when the great bulk of the industrial population, whether in cities or fields, found their reasonable demands persistently refused, and their unreasonable burdens as perseveringly increased; found themselves continually out-voted through bribery and corruption, out-manceuvred by unscrupulous

stratagems and intrigue, involved in unrighteous quarrels or unnecessary responsibilities abroad, and denied all wholesome reforms and equitable progress at home ; would you or any upright man dare to condemn them if they died with arms in their hands ? Or, if believing civil war to be hopeless and wrong, they emigrated *en masse* to our colonies, carrying with them the best brain and muscle of our country, and also (like our Irish brethren) an undying hatred of England, with Saxon instead of only Celtic bitterness, to foreign shores ? I think you would say they deserved honour, at all events, not reproach, for preferring death or expatriation to the endurance of tyranny, whether at the hands of a sovereign, of an aristocracy, or a mob ; for resisting the tyranny of Cæsar or his servile followers, whether Cæsar be a monarch or a prime minister, and the mob be dressed in broadcloth or rags.

Certainly the true Conservatives are those who endeavour to promote political education as a means to the equitable and peaceful settlement of "burning" or any other questions, and to ensure gradual progress towards social and political improvement and reform. Dr. Arnold's admirable words might fitly be inscribed in letters of gold on the walls of every political club and debating society, including "St. Stephen's" itself :—"There is nothing so revolutionary, because there is nothing so unnatural and so convulsive to society as the strain to keep things fixed, when all the world is, by the very laws of its creation, in eternal progress, and the cause of all the evils in the world may be traced to that natural, but most deadly error of human indolence and corruption, that our business is to preserve and not to improve. It is the ruin of us all alike—individuals, schools, and nations."

Hence, as it seems to me, the need of those social and political discussions, and for those social and political lectures, that study of History and Political Economy to which you allude in your letter on the political education of the people, and on which I have dwelt in the pamphlet above referred to. As I have there said, innumerable political clubs are springing up all over the country. In the papers of the "Workman's Education League" we urge the pressing need of utilizing both them and the Workmen's Social Clubs as centres of social and political education, not simply as places for amusement and gossip, or as mere engines for party fanaticism, bribery, and intrigue. If your influence (deservedly great as it is, especially at the headquarters of historical study), and that of the various able young men trained at your university, and now lecturing on Prof. Stuart's admirable "University Extension" scheme, or at the London clubs for our "League," can help on the good work among the industrial classes, for which Lovett and his brave coadjutors "spended and were spent" in times when social and political education was often a dangerous cause to advocate, none will have greater reason to be thankful than those classes which possess the bulk of the property, education, and religion, of this vast empire. But for the working classes themselves it is simply a question of gradual but magnificent progress, or inevitable political annihilation and social decay.

Believe me,

Dear Mr. Seeley,

Yours, with sincere regard,

HENRY SOLLY.

Addiscombe Grove, Croydon,

May, 1881.

JAMES WOODFORD,

CARPENTER AND CHARTIST.

INTRODUCTORY.

HAVING begun life first as plough-boy on a farm (Farmer Marsden's at Broadfield, in Essex), and then as a carpenter's apprentice, while the firm of which I am now senior partner employs between three and four hundred men in the building trade, I have seen a good many sides of life, and known many people of all sorts and characters. So I thought I might have something to tell that would interest the young folks, the children of my old shop-mates, as well as some of the old Chartists themselves, who are still living, if I could only find how to tell it.

But I'm no great hand with my pen, and I found that the publishers to whom I took my manuscript when I got it done at last, thought my style wouldn't altogether go down with the gentlefolks; yet I wanted *them* also to read it if they would. So after talking over the matter with an old friend who has been as much used to composition as I have to calculations, I settled to give him leave to polish up my rough notes and give them the right turn here and there, and make the whole thing ship-shape for the public, just as I've seen the drawing master touch up his pupil's sketches till they were a'most as good as his own. This is more particularly the case with regard to all about the women in these "Recollections," for I don't understand the sex altogether. Besides, my friend learnt many more things about their histories both from themselves and Davie Roberts in later life than I ever knew, or could have known.

But though, as I say, my friend has polished me up a bit, he's left me rather

rough still, I fancy, and all I have to say is that I've done my best, because I thought some of my recollections might be useful to a few people, at all events; and such as they are, master reader, you can take them or leave them, as you happen to choose, and an old man's blessing go with them, and with you too, if you like to take it and find you can keep it.

JAMES WOODFORD.

CHAPTER I.

It was a snowy Saturday night, in December, and we were talking about the Thatchers, for there had been a row over there earlier in the evening, and father had gone across to try and stop it, and had just come back. I remember mother saying,—

“Fifteen years ago, who’d have thought it ’ud a’ come to this! Why, it was one of the prettiest little weddings as ever I see, for I remember a lot of us elder Sunday school girls went up to church, and brought her a few flowers. Poor Polly! she was always a favourite wherever she went, though she was so pretty—and vain enough for two.”

“Aye,” said my father, chiming in, “she were a beauty, and no mistake, and though

I was but a lad, I fancied myself in love with her, like the rest of us. Do you mind our coming over from Ockerton, Molly, that Sunday morning, and bringing those dog-roses and things? We all thought it a fine thing to get married, and looked up to Tom Thatcher as a confounded lucky dog. Tom was a good-looking, strapping young chap at that time, he was."

"Yes," said mother, "and I remember how the kind old vicar (I wish we had one as good among us now) looked at them admiring like, and yet a bit sorrowfully, I thought, as he shook hands, and they went off to make their mark in the book. He had seen a good many young couples go from that altar quite as well looking and happy; and some of them hadn't too much luck arterwards."

Then we all sat quiet, looking into the fire. Presently says I, "What happened to them, then?"

"What happened?" said my dad. "Why this happened. The young fellow had just got a situation of twelve shillings

a week, a cottage, and pickings, as farming-man up there at the Hall, Squire Fletcher's. He was a Lunnon banker you know, making heaps of money in town, and wasting a bit of it pretty freely, as I could see, in what they call "hamatoor" farming down here. Well, Tom Thatcher got the benefit of it, and he went to work with a will on the bit o' farm, and she looked arter the cows and poultry, and I often used to think as I went about the place, what a nice life of it they had."

"But how came you to see so much of them, then, father?"


"Why, don't you know I was the gentleman's carpenter, Jemmy, kept on reg'lar at work all the year round, on the fences, and carts, and repairs in and out o' doors? And I got the place, Master Jemmy, just afore you were born," said my father, stroking my head kindly, as if I had been the cat. Then there was another silence, till father went on again, rather slowly,—

"Poor Polly. But troubles didn't come all at once. I remember some time afore

I went to the Hall for good, I were doing a job for my master, and I saw she had got a bonny little girl in her arms, and looked as bright and happy as you could wish." I looked at mother, and gave a bit of a wink.


"That's Maggie," says I, "she comes to our Sunday School." Mother smiled but said nothing, and father went on,—

"After a time there were more children, and then there were complaints up at the Hall about the milk and eggs, and the young mother was accused of keeping what she didn't ought to. Then Thatcher was too fond of the 'Three Blackbirds,'—but the worst job of all was he and a lot more of Essex carters got drinking one day at a 'public' in Whitechapel, after he had been selling Squire's hay, and when he came home the money was short, and he said he'd been robbed. But the master was told how Tom had been standing treat, and then how they got to 'tossing for pots.' So there was a reg'lar row about it, and Tom, he'd have had the sack at



once, but Polly goes up to Madam, and sobbed herself into 'his-strikes,' and promised it should never happen again. But somehow arter that the Squire was always very stern with Tom, and seemed to be always suspecting him like, and Tom sulked, and his wife was peevish, for the children came fast, and he was a great deal more at the 'Three Blackbirds' than was good for any of them, except landlord. *He* made a good thing of 'em all, he did. Well, you see, one night, about six o'clock, it was getting dusk, and I was just shutting up my workshop in the coachyard, when I heard such a row in Thatcher's cottage. He was swearing at his wife like a costermonger, and she scolding like twenty cats, and then I heard a scream, so I ran down and coachman after me—he was just putting his horses to—and there lay poor Polly all of a heap, for the brute had knocked her clean over. 'This won't do, Master Tom,' says I, and we picked the poor woman up, and found she was more frightened than hurt, though

her eye was blackened. Then Tom wanted to fight me, but coachman wouldn't let us, and he went out, up the yard, swearing worse than ever, and as he went up towards the Hall, not thinking in his cups what he was about, who should he meet but young Master Fletcher come to ask what was the matter, and why the carriage didn't come round. So Tom, seeing him, turns sharp round on us, who were just behind him, gives coachman a noser, which makes him look like a butcher, and runs off to the barn. Young master gets all the story out of coachman in the heat of the moment, for he was mortal angry, as was natural, and next day Tom and his wife got notice to cut, this time for good and all. I never saw a little chap look so flabbergasted as poor Master Edward that night, for he was a kind-hearted, delicate little fellow, you know, and he was very fond of poor Polly, and of Tom too, for that matter. Tom used to put him up on the cart-horses and take him about the fields, so he cried like a baby when they



were going. Tom's worked on the roads ever since. He'll not get another berth like that in a hurry."


I was very unhappy myself by this time, for before that night I sometimes thought my pretty Maggie had got trouble at home, and it was plain enough now, that the "scrimmage" which had made my father go over to the Thatchers' an hour or two before, wasn't the first thing of the kind there, nor likely to be the last.

When I saw Maggie at Sunday school, next day, looking so pretty and down-hearted, and as if she had a world of shame and trouble to hide, and then heard her in the choir afterwards singing like an angel, I said to myself, "Now, Jemmy Woodford, you see what you've got to do for the rest of *your* days. You'll just help Maggie Thatcher to bear her troubles, and bring her better days, mind that!" And so I've tried my best to do it ever since; God knows that.

But not exactly in the way I once thought it might be. Though, perhaps, it

was all for the best. I couldn't think so, however, for a long time, and I'm not sure about it now. I often thought it very hard, for I knew Maggie first, and, I may as well say it outright, I loved her from that day, with all my heart, though we were but mere boy and girl; couldn't help loving her, and always shall.

Well, there was a lad came to be apprenticed to father, named Davie Roberts. He and I took to each other, though he was a year or so younger than myself. But he was a bold, daring, venturesome lad, and yet as tenderhearted as a girl. I got him to come to Sunday school, for I liked my teacher, and knew it 'ud do Davie good; but he had been knocked about at day school (and at home too), and when he found he weren't to be licked at Sunday school, he gave teachers a deal of trouble. He seemed to enjoy teasing them, and didn't get much good, I thought, from coming; but years after, I know he looked back sorrowfully enough to their patient kindness, and that did him a deal o' good



when he and they were miles apart. Their teaching wasn't all lost. But at the time, he only seemed to care about what he called asserting his independence, and revenging himself on anybody as taught him for bad treatment elsewhere. For all that, he was such a bright, high-spirited young chap; all the girls liked him, and I soon saw Maggie Thatcher thought a good deal of him.

I fancy he became a sort of hero in her eyes, because he was always getting into scrapes somewhere, and getting punished for them. Sometimes she was very angry with him, but still always admired him, and was uncommon sad when at last one Sunday he was declared to be "the baddest boy in the whole school," and was going to be expelled. Yet it wasn't wickedness in him, or I know she'd have hated him. And I fancy the thought came in her mind that perhaps she could reform him; for I came upon 'em once by a stile, and she was half crying, and begging him to be a better lad, and not vex teachers so, and if

he'd promise, she would speak to her own teacher and try to get him kept on. I passed on as quick as I could, with merely a "good night," but I could see his face was as red as a turkey-cock's comb, and I suppose he did promise, for though he never took much to his lessons, either there or anywhere else, he was kept on, and behaved a deal better; and about a year afterwards, when the Squire and Parson gave the "School Treat," and the prizes,—young Davie, he gets a prize for good behaviour! Maggie, as usual, got two or three, and when I saw them in a corner of the field after tea, showing each other their books, I guessed how it was all going. I should have liked well enough to show *my* beautiful books to the pretty little lass, God bless her! But it wasn't to be; and I tried not to be so mean as to envy him, for I could see how happy he was.

There was another little lass came to that school, whom the lads thought a good deal of, and a prettier, livelier little maid than Kitty Barber one wouldn't often see.

She was a merry soul, to be sure, at that time ; always up to fun and mischief, and making everybody as merry as herself when they'd let her. We used to call her "Puss-in-Boots," because she used to come to school one winter in a rare fine pair of fur-edged boots, of which she was mighty proud and made a great show of, and her name being Kitty, it all suited very well. But though she was so merry and bright, I wasn't over fond of her, for you see she was an orphan brought up by an uncle and aunt, who lived near the Thatchers', and Maggie Thatcher had always been uncommon kind to her. I often thought what a blessing it was to Kitty, or might have been, to have as a friend a girl with Maggie's good sense and modesty, to keep her flightiness in check ; and I knew that many a time Maggie's advice would have kept poor little "Puss-in-Boots" out of scrapes ; and many's the time, too, when Maggie's candle was burning at night that she might mend Kitty's old clothes, or to get her ready for church and school in her

new finery. So I didn't like to hear Maggie made fun of and laughed at behind her back by a girl to whom she had been like a little mother. Nor I didn't like the sharp things Kitty would say to Maggie, sometimes to her face, when Davie and a lot of us was by, and so make all the other boys laugh at Maggie. She didn't mean anything particular unkind, and didn't think how ungrateful it was to her benefactor. But there,—Kitty thought a deal of Davie Roberts, like most of the other girls, and that made her tongue stinging when she saw he thought so much of Maggie. I suppose that's all as it generally is. As for Maggie, she came down upon Kitty sharp enough, I fancy, when they were by themselves after one of these little affairs; but she kept on being her friend, and working for her all the same, and never changed.

Father, coming home latish one night, told us he had been kept at the Hall, fixing a temporary work-bench over a sofa for young Master Edward, who had met with an accident at school some days ago,

and had to be brought home in the carriage.

"He is a lively young chap," said my father.

"And as full of funny fancies as an egg is of meat," added my mother. "Do you mind his harnessing our little Jem to his wheelbarrow along with the big Newfoundland dog, and making 'em tear round the grounds after dark last winter, with a penny trumpet and the stable lanthorn?"

We all laughed, and says I, "He is a nice young chap, free with his apples and marbles, and not a bit of pride in him."

But father turned sharp on me, and says he, quite stern-like, "Jem, how dare you take things from the young master? I won't have my sons cringing to rich folk for apples or anything else."

"But I don't cringe, father; he will have me take them, and I never asked him for nothing in my life, and you shouldn't say so!" I added, for my back was up.

"Don't answer your father like that, sir," said mother.

There was a brother chip, named Bill Stokes, supping with us that night; came to Broadfield to consult father about a job at the school at Ockerton, where young Master Fletcher went, and where he was employed. So to make things pleasant again, he says, "Ah! I mind when that young chap first went to Ockerton School, my heart sometimes ached for him, among all those rough lads. For you see he seemed rather delicate and only used to women-folk, and there were some precious young blackguards and bullies in the Doctor's team. I've seen the tears in his eyes many a time, but he got laughed out of all that, and holds his head up now with the best."

"Aye," said my father, "And I hope he'll have cried enough over his own little troubles to have some feeling, when he grows up, for the big troubles of others. Poor folk in this land want a word said for them, now-a-days."

"Bully makes bully, we used to say," answered our visitor. "But, howsomever."

I suppose the big folk are beginning to speak up for the little 'uns. They carried that 'ere Reform Bill in first-rate style over the Tories heads and the Duke's sword!"

"Yes," replied my father, "but I don't see as it's doing *us* any good. *I*'ve no need to grumble, but I can't abear to hear how all the poor folk are suffering in Spital Fields and down in Leicester and Nottingham, and all through Lancashire and Yorkshire, and over in Ireland. Big Dan may well beat his big drum for 'Repale' as he calls it! I tell you what it is, mate," continued my father, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "the rich folk don't know what poor folks feel, and what's more they don't know how to treat 'em like Christians."

"Like Christians!" echoed our friend. "They don't treat 'em as well as their dogs and horses, though they do look on us as some sort of inferior creature."

"I've wondered to hear that nice little chap, Master Fletcher," said my father,

“ talking sometimes about his father’s servants and work-people as if they were so many niggers. Yet he’ll be as sociable and friendly with me as you please when he comes to handle my tools in the workshop. It’s only bad bringing up, and hearing his governor talk about the lower orders, and such like, in that nasty proud way.”


“ Well, we’ll have our innings some day,” chuckled Mr. Stokes, rubbing his hands cheerfully. “ We must keep our eyes open, and look out for our chance, Woodford.”

So rising, he shook hands and departed, leaving me in great wonderment as to how and when “ poor folk ” were to get their innings, and who would bowl to them, and what bats they would use, all which became plain to me, and a good many more, in due time.

CHAPTER II.


TIME went on, and I was out of my apprenticeship ; and through father's speaking for me to Squire Fletcher, I got a good berth at once in the yard of a friend of his (a great timber-merchant), down at Rotherhithe ; and who should come down a year or two later to live there for a time but young Master Edward himself. I had made a few acquaintances, but they were not worth much, and a deal too fond of the beer to suit my book. So I was uncommonly glad when the young gentleman took to me pretty heartily ; for all that he was rather proud, and made me understand there was a difference between us. But when he did talk and make himself agreeable—ah, there was nothing I had known like it. Lucky for me he was

very fond of rowing, and it was hardly safe for him to go on the river there by himself, because of the lot of steamers and craft of all kind, up and down every minute, and the strong tides and the timber-rafts. So, as I had got handy with my oar, he used to ask for me to go with him now and again; and so we often had a good pull together. He was uncommonly plucky, I should say, on the water, and rare fun it often was. But the way in which we dodged the steamers sometimes made my flesh creep a bit, not being a regular boatman, and Master Edward a very bad swimmer. Then at night sometimes he would stand talking with me a bit on the wharf. He had got to look after the erection and management of some new machinery for a patent, and a mill-wright and one of the engine-fitters stayed to watch the experiments when the machinery was ready, sometimes half through the night; so they and I used to have many a chat. They were very intelligent, steady fellows in the main, and



liked to give me a wrinkle or two that would do me no harm, not like some of the chaps in the building trades whom I used to meet at the "Sawyer's Arms." Joe Rufford was the name of the engine-fitter; I can't remember what they called the other. But though young master was always very civil to these men, barring his being nasty sometimes, and expecting more than they were inclined to give, he plainly thought they were only a more intelligent kind of horse or machine of some sort. But it seemed to me that was what nearly all the upper-class folk thought in those days of the "great unwashed," as I've heard them call us. And if Master Edward had not known me as a boy, learnt a little carpentering of me, and played with me at the Hall, he would not have been as friendly, I guess, as he was down at Rotherhithe, and even then when I had done anything for him that he wanted, he seemed to forget all about me as much as if I had been an old shoe. Not that I wanted a tip, and as for a

glass ! I should think not indeed. Father drummed all that out of me, as I said, years before, and made me want to be always as independent as the gentlefolk themselves. So I hated to see fellows sneaking up and touching their hats and asking for "something to drink," whenever they had done a job for a gentleman, or, may be, had only been talking to him a bit. Rot their meanness ! I know how the gentry despise us for all that sort of thing. Father, as I said, shook those notions out of me. But what I mean was that Edward Fletcher knew a deal more than I did, and had read a wonderful lot, and I often wished he'd let me look at some of the many books he had got there, and talk to me about them ; for I was fond of reading, but could not often get hold of a book, and I thought he was often rather lonely like, and I used to say to him in my mind, " Why don't you ask me up to that room of yours when you're all alone, and tell me a bit about the tides and stars, and Canada, and Rebellion



there, and what the 'Mericans are doing with their Republic, and all that." But I didn't dare ask him, not even for a book. Yet he would not have been as proud as he was, I am certain, but for the ways o' thinking of all his class. But I believe he was a bit selfish with all his pleasant kindly ways, not caring much for other folk—I mean for poor folk—he cared a deal when he saw any of his own set in trouble. But I did think it rather strange, when I was took ill there once, and even the head clerk at the wharf came to ask after me, and left half-a-crown with my landlady to get me something nourishing, Master Edward never came a-nigh me the whole time. But he had a deal on his mind, I will say that. The gentleman who had taken out the patent which Master Edward was doing his best to work into shape, was a reg'lar queer customer. He'd drink brandy and water like a fish, and come down to the wharf more than half screwed before dinner, pull off his coat and work with a will, making the men fly about

till they were half mad, but still keeping them at it, and knowing just what he wanted them to do. By Jingo! he was a clever customer, with an eye like a hawk. But he was too clever by half. He'd all sorts of smart projects and rare notions. If he could only have stuck to one or two of them, and made them complete, he might have been the richest man in England. But Master Edward never could get things to go right, because his employer, this Mr. Brindley, was never to be found when wanted; and the poor young gentleman fretted himself to fiddlesticks in sheer disgust. I've known him sit out in the shed by the engine-fire hour after hour till past midnight, waiting for Mr. Brindley to come and finish some important experiments; and more than once, when everything was going to the bad for want of the master, I've rowed him across the river at 11 or 12 o'clock at night, and he has tramped up Limehouse Road and fished the governor out of the back-parlour of a certain tavern, and brought him down

to the wharf just in time to save the cookery. But all that wasn't business, and couldn't last. Young Master made a fine discovery himself in another line, and Brindley was reg'lar cock-a-hoop about it, and told him he'd made their fortunes, and years afterwards it was proved that if they had worked on at it, Brindley's estimate of its being worth 20,000*l.* a year was under the mark. But what can you do with a chap that's always boozing? Young Master Fletcher, at all events, couldn't either lead or drive him, fret as he might.

Poor fellow! He had something more to fret about, I fancied, than not getting a livelihood. His father could give him bread and cheese. But I think there was a young lady in the case, whom he was desperate fond of, and her folks wouldn't hear of it, because he had nothing to live on, and she was very beautiful, I heard, and many to woo her, and her family held their heads as high as the Fletchers, or higher. So he was in a great taking about

the failure of these experiments, and Brindley's drinking, and, at last, one day they came to high words, and I couldn't help overhearing young Master say in a towering rage (for the window was open, and I at work just below), "I wish to God I had never seen you, Brindley!" and then the fellow, who had been drinking hard as usual, got into such a passion, I thought I should have had to go to part them. He swore he'd knock young Fletcher down, and I don't know what he wouldn't do; but the young gentleman held his own, and as they didn't come to blows, I stayed outside. Then there was a low murmuring of voices, and next I heard Brindley saying he was very sorry, and he didn't know how much Master Edward had on his mind, and he mustn't give way, and they'd manage between them to make a heap o' money, and he should win the young lady after all; "faint heart never won fair lady," and so on, till my young gentleman looked quite bright again for a few days. However, it

all came to nothing. After many ups and downs, he found he could make nothing of either the new or the old discovery, clever as they were; and a'most broken-hearted, I think, he went away; all the machinery was sold, and Brindley soon after died of what they call "*delirium tremens*."

I was laid up at the time Master Edward left, and, as I said, he never came to see me, which I thought rather hard at the time, for I cared for him a deal more than he cared for me, and I didn't consider I was nothing more to him than his father's workman, getting my wages every week. I had never been to college, and had next to no schooling. My dirty flannel jacket and corduroys, and paper cap, all helped to put a great wall between us. I wasn't a gentleman and had nothing to give him, and wasn't supposed to know anything he cared about. So no wonder if he thought as much about me as I did about my jack-plane, and a deal less than he did of his dog. I used to envy that dog sometimes.

But no one could help liking him, he was so pleasant and high-spirited, and had such a way with him. After I got a hint about the young lady, I used to think, Ah, she may have a many to court her, but if she knows he's in love with her, I'll be bound for it, she'd like the experiments to turn up trumps.

Well, he went his way and I went mine, and when we met again it was under rather different circumstances.

But before the whole business down at the wharf came to an end, I had learned a deal from the mill-wright and engine-fitter if I didn't learn much from Edward Fletcher. One had worked in the large London shops and the other came last from Birmingham, but he was a Sheffield man. They both belonged to their Trades' Union, and showed me many things about wages and masters I had never thought of before. Then they were first-rate politicians, and chatted among themselves about the Reform Bill and Dan O'Connell, Harry Hunt, and Joe Hume. They always made me at

home among them, though they didn't like my not belonging to a Union, and I never stood treat. Indeed, for the little I took altogether, I should have been shown the door by the landlord, I believe, many a time if I hadn't been in such good company. For my friends, though on the whole, as I said very steady men, thought nothing of one or two, or even three pots a night, with extras on Saturdays if they didn't go home. It's being in lodgings or living at a public-house plays the deuce with men, for then they have to make a home of the "public," and, of course, they're only welcome there if they drink freely.

Once I had a row with them, soon after they came (though it was my own fault), for I had never heard of mill-wrights before, and says I, one day, in a cocky sort of manner, "Well, I don't see what right an engineer has to be working in wood. I should think you might leave that to us carpenters!" and didn't they turn upon me! I never heard such language before, even from Jem Thatcher or at the "Three

Blackbirds." But I wasn't afraid of them, though once I thought we should have got to blows, and when they saw I could stand up for myself, and was only one against two, they cooled down and showed me how pattern-making and mill-wrights' wood-carving were regular engineers' work, and then I saw how foolish I had been.

Well, I got to understand from their talk what my father and Mr. Stokes used to mean in their talk, and I added a few more notions to my ideas about the working men and their masters, and the upper classes : and, says I to myself, "If there's many thinks as you gentlemen do, there's trouble in store for somebody, and a storm's brewing, as sure as Old Nick's alive." And though I thought they were sometimes too hard on the masters and the aristocracy, I believed there was a deal too much truth in all they said. I began to read the accounts in the weekly newspapers, which my gentlemen took in, of political meetings both in London and the country, which before I had never troubled

my head about, and I looked at the sad accounts of distress (which filled columns of those and other papers) in a light that hadn't occurred to me before. I couldn't help feeling that the working classes were suffering a great deal of injustice, and that the upper classes, instead of trying to put an end to their sufferings and wrongs, were only bent on their own business or pleasure. But I didn't know then (and there was nobody to tell me) how much the whole nation, working men and all, owed to a large number of those upper classes who had fought the battle of the people and struggled and suffered for "Reform" in the days of Pitt, Castlereagh, and Dundas, when it was real martyrdom in many ways to do so. I've learnt since there were noblemen, baronets, M.Ps., great merchants, manufacturers, shop-keepers, who were ruined socially, politically, or actually, who went to prison or into the Gazette, or were driven out of the country because they stood up against the Tory tyrants of the day; and at last

they got Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and the Reform Bill, and then a many useful measures. But for all that the poor were half starving at the time (1837), and the distress in the manufacturing districts was often terrible, even to read of. What must it have been to bear?

One day in February, 1837, my friends told me they were going up to a public meeting that was to be held at the "Crown and Anchor" in the Strand, and asked if I'd like to go with them. I wasn't very fond of a crowd or a row, and, from what I heard them saying, I thought there was like enough to be both. However, I went, and shall not soon forget it. A new world had been opened on me by the engineers' talk at Rotherhithe. Before that time, I had taken all things as I found them; the difference of ranks and of privileges, the inequalities of fortune and enjoyment, the pride of the great folk, and the suffering and intemperance of the poor. I took them as "laws of nature," not to be

dodged or altered. But what they had said, prepared me to suck down like a fish all I heard that night. The King had just died—a new Parliament was being summoned—the nation was in a ferment. O'Connell, Roebuck, Wakley, Joe Hume, Leader, Col. Thompson, Sharman Crawford, and other leaders of the Radical Party, who had stood up in the late Parliament against overwhelming odds on behalf of the rights of the people, were present, and, amid vociferous cheering, denounced the Whig Ministry, with Lord John Russell at its head, exposed the treachery of the middle classes towards the working men, by whose aid they had got the Reform Bill, and claimed a new reform which should put an end to the wrongs and sufferings of the lower classes. Speaker after speaker eloquently denounced the existing state of things as a sham and a shame, demanding immediate redress. I was amazed beyond telling, and completely carried away by the enthusiasm of the speakers and the crowd. But there was one among them who struck

me, when I first saw him on the platform, as more worth noticing than all the rest, for I felt sure he was a working man. When I found from my friends I was right, and that he was only a journeyman cabinet-maker, I looked up at him with a sort of awe and delight. For thinks I, What a wonderful chap you must be to be sitting there with all those nobs and famous speakers, and going to speak yourself, too, I shouldn't wonder. Sure enough he did speak, and as well in one sense as the best of them ; for he knew just what he wanted and what we working men wanted, and he went at it in a plain, quiet, but terribly determined way, that made you feel he'd hold on like grim death, come what might, till he got all he asked for. He was a tall good-looking young fellow with a lot of long curly brown hair, and all the workmen round me cheered him till the roof rang again : but there were others of our class I could see didn't like him so well. And that's just what I've seen since. If one working man

above his mates and is cheered and clapped, there are a dozen or two thousand, very soon out of temper, and running him down—as jealous as monkeys in the Regent's Park gardens at feeding time—and all of them thinking they have as good a right as he to be put up on a platform, or stuck in some important office, and be cheered and buttered and clapped.

“What's the young fellow's name?” I asked; “he's a rare good 'un, whoever he be;” and then I heard a name which was pretty well known through England two or three years afterwards, though as he was only a working man and a pioneer in great and noble movements, who made roads for other men to pass over to victory, while he seemed only beaten at almost every point, folks don't know so much about him now-a-days as about some general who has won a battle in India.

“Well, who is he?” I asked of my friend the engine-fitter.

“Who is he?” replied Mr. Rufford, rather slowly, “why, I take it that's

William Lovett, the Cornish lad, and by — I wish there were five hundred like him."

"Tell me all about him," says I.

"Can't tell you now, you duffer. Listen to the speakers and learn a little more as you ought to know. But come along after the meeting and have a pint, and I'll tell you a bit about our Cornish boy."

CHAPTER III.

Coming out of the meeting quite dazed and wonderstruck, I saw Roebuck, O'Connell, and others getting into an open carriage and driving off, with our fellows shouting and hallooing after them at the top of their throats, and I too went shouting after them like mad, when all of a sudden I run my head against a great blue-coated arm and the light flashed from my eyes with the blow, and I felt myself caught hold of and swung clean round by one of those raw lobsters they called "Peelers," the New Police; and says he, "I say, my fine fellows, shut up this row and clear the pavement, will you?" But the words were hardly out of his mouth when a powerful young fellow in a fustian jacket wrenched his hand off my arm, crying out, "He

warn't saying nothin' to you ! Let 'im bide, will yer ! " and while the bobby grabbed at him, saying, " I'll run *you* in, at all events," a whole heap of our chaps flung themselves on him, and before he could draw his truncheon, my friend and I were swept clean away from him.

When I got my breath I saw it was Joe Rufford that had picked me out of the "lobster's"¹ claws, and I told him I thought it was very handsome of him. So we went off to a "pub" which he recommended, and I stood treat in the cosy tap-room corner while he told me a little about the young Cornish cabinet-maker. As anybody can now read all about him for themselves in his own "Autobiography"² I shan't put down here what they can read better told there. But he was doing then, and for many a year afterwards, a noble work for Englishmen, and I shall often

¹ The "New Police" used often to be called "raw lobsters" in those days, because of the colour of their uniform.

² Published by Trübner and Co., Ludgate Hill



have to mention him, along with others, before I've done.

So Mr. Rufford went on to tell me by easy stages, how Lovett was a self-taught man, and hadn't been brought up to the cabinet-making, but had pushed himself into the trade by sheer determination and using his brains, and how he had joined discussion-societies and what they called a Mechanics' Institute, and how he had helped on a fine move for working-men, called the Co-operative Society, and then how he had been fighting the battle of the "Unstamped Press," shoulder to shoulder with those true friends of cheap knowledge for the people, Hetherington, Watson, and Cleave, in London, and Abel Heywood in Manchester, to get the taxes on newspapers, &c., repealed—in fact how for the last ten years there had been nothing going for the good of the people but what William Lovett had been mixed up with it, or taken the lead in it. So I said I thought I should like uncommonly well to know Mr. Lovett, whereupon Mr.

Rufford laughed at me immensely, and said I had a good deal of "cheek," and a good many steps to climb on the ladder before I could shake hands with a man like that. Now this daunted me a bit, just when I was beginning to feel that kind of enthusiasm for what is better than oneself, which I've often noticed since is one of the best feelings a youngster can have. It comes freely enough in one's youth, but if checked then doesn't sprout so well afterwards. It's a fine thing for a young man to know men whom he can attach himself to, and honour and look up to.


However, my friend was in a very good humour that night, from having baulked the bobbies, and he promised he'd do what he could to bring me under Lovett's notice, and just before we separated, he said, "And when he does shake hands with you, remember you owe it to him that you don't run a chance of being drawn to serve in our tyrant's body-guard, that accursed Militia. William Lovett, and his brave wife there, let the rascals take his furniture

rather than he should serve in it, because, as he told the magistrates, he had no voice in choosing the persons who made the laws, and while he was called on by those laws to protect the rights and property of others, his own rights, and his own property which was his labour, were not protected. But the whole affair, young gentleman," said Rufford, as he lit his last pipe, and I paid the score, "was brought before Parliament; think o' that, my boy, by Henry Hunt and Joseph Hume, and it made such a shindy that there has been no *drawing* for the Militia ever since. So you see we're got *some* friends in high places, and they'll help to haul *us* up there, too, by-and-by."

From that time Mr. Rufford was always very polite and friendly, in fact, as I saw afterwards, rather too much so, for though he was a good smart workman, and as honest as gold, he was a little too fond of "Free and Easies," and worse places than them; and if I hadn't been brought up to be rather shy of the public-house and low

dissipation, and hadn't still had a sort of hope as to bonnie Meg Thatcher, he might have taken me a deuced bit astray at that time. Then he spent his money very freely; and though no one need want a glass while he had a tanner left, one good turn, he said, deserved another, and he expected all his friends to be equally generous, whether they had had a pull at his pot, or whether they hadn't, which sometimes made it come hard upon me, with only small wages. But almost all the journeymen I came across in those days seemed to be much in the same way as far as drinking went; and the amount they spent both from "footings" and "fines" in the workshop, and when they were tippling and standing treat at night, tossing for pots, paying bets, and so on, was enormous. Some say it's only a little better now; but I believe there's considerable improvement.

But my engineer did me many a good turn in his way. Among other things, I well remember his coming to me one day




after he had left Rotherhithe, and saying the foreman of a large shop in the building trade near where he worked wanted another hand, and that I had better come up and ask for the berth. It was better wages, and some chance of rising, which I never could have just working as a jobbing carpenter at an old timber-yard, down at Rotherhithe. "But if you get into a shop like Peto and Grissell's," he added, "you're sure to get on; for there are so many drinking chaps (and it's the cleverest drink the most), that a steady young cove with a little brains has got a rare chance." Well, thinks I, that sounds true enough, and I'd like to be near an old friend; so I applied for the place, and got it, and came to town, and lodged near where Rufford was living, out there in Camden Road, where there were green fields then, not far from White Conduit House, and Copenhagen Fields.

They were a nice young couple I lodged with—Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. I heard of them through Mrs. Thatcher, who was aunt

to Mrs. Taylor. He kept cows, and she minded the dairy, and they had two of the prettiest little children I ever saw. One night, soon after I came, they were talking about a young girl as we sat down to supper; and the Missus—she says, “Ah, he’ll be a lucky man who gets her to wife.” “Yes,” says her husband; “she’ll make a rare good wife if she gets the right man, though I’m afraid she has a hard life of it at home. She’s a mere child still, but she’ll be the comeliest lass, by-and-by, as ever I saw, present company always excepted.” “And as good as she’s pretty,” says the Missus, simpering, and looking like a blush rose on a May morning. Well who should they be talking about, I found, but her cousin, the girl Maggie Thatcher, who I thought so much about when she and I went to Sunday School, at Broadfield. So I went to bed, wondering if Davie Roberts was after her still, or whether I should go down next Sunday to see father and mother, and ask about her again.

Well; I did go down, and what I le



wasn't quite pleasant, and made my young couple rather sad when I came back and told them—but I was a deal more cut up about it myself than they were—which was p'raps natural enough. What follows about my former school-mates, I learnt at various times, but put it all together now as advised.

I found father and mother pretty well and cheerful, except for the rheumatics, and they seemed uncommon glad to see me, for I hadn't been home since Christmas, and after dinner they told me all they knew about the Thatchers, and I learnt something also from a neighbour; but it was very little I heard then about Davie Roberts, or the young master up at the hall. There was plenty to be learnt, however, about poor Maggie and her parents; for Tom Thatcher would go on just in the old way; and one night, Maggie, it seems, couldn't stand it any longer, and she told the drunken brute she didn't care what he did to her (for she had hardly begun to speak before he up with his fist), but he

“shouldn’t knock mother about if she could help it.” And then, her mother told me, she drew herself up (she was but fifteen, though tall of her age), folded her arms, and looked the fellow full in the face. For a moment, he seemed cowed before her, but the next minute he cried out that he “wasn’t going to be lectured by an impudent wench,” and made a rush at the brave girl, felling her to the ground at a blow. Then when his wife screamed, and was lifting her up, says he to poor Maggie, “Now, miss, who’s a-going to say I shan’t hit that blubbering old fool when she gets a-nagging me?” Meg was up on her feet by this time, but she said her head seemed going round like a mill-wheel, and her eyes were all so blinking-like, that she could scarce see. And then, as his wife was crying, he bid her hold her row, and when that only made her sob the more, he was going to give her what he had just given poor Meg, when quick as lightning the girl lifted a wooden chair and struck full upon him. The ruffian went down a

heap, and before he could rise, for he was nigh stunned, Meg was out in the street shrieking "Murder! Help!" I don't think the cowardly neighbours would have done anything, for they were used to such rows, and my father and mother were living further away than they used to be, and heard nothing of it. But there was a new parish constable lately put on in the village, and as good luck would have it he was coming by, and thought he'd better interfere. So he steps up, and Meg goes back with him, and he asks if she'll give her father in charge. "No," says she, "I'll not do that to-night. He's got something to-night he never had before. But look'ee here, father," ("And she turned full on him," said the constable to me, "as I might turn my bull's-eye on you,") "you may murder me, if you please. I'll do nothing to save you from the gallows. But mind—I'll swing for it myself, if knocking out your brains will save mother from any more of your devil's tricks." Thatcher was sober enough now; and whether it

was that he saw by the girl's eye and manner that she was in earnest, or the sight of the constable, or the effects of the blow he had got, I can't tell, but from that time they say, though he's often sulky and cross as a beast, and there's a deal to put up with, he's never lifted his hand agen mother or daughter since; and what's more, he told one of his mates he thought he must have been behaving rather badly at home, somehow, now and then. But he didn't come to that notion all at once, and swearing a terrible oath at his daughter after she had told him what to expect, he stumbled out of the cottage muttering, "I'll pay you out for this some day, young woman, as sure as you're born," and began chopping wood in their garden-shed in the starlight.

At first when I heard of all this I trembled like an aspen leaf to think of what dangers the brave girl was living in. But I believe, though there was so that was brutal in Thatcher who drink was in him, there was no m

in him. When he got sober I think he couldn't help admiring her pluck and her love for her mother, and from something he said to me, I fancy he was wishing sometimes he could make her love and respect him, too, a bit. At all events, he never lifted his hand against either of them again, nor often against any of his mates, as far as I could hear. There was some good in him as well as bad, and, poor fellow, he had had a great deal to make him go wrong, and not much to help him go right, anyways.

Meg's mother now had a quiet time of it, so to speak, but though the child had won a great victory, and not a bit too soon, I don't think the effect on her own mind was altogether good. There were all the seeds in her of a sort of Queen Bess, as the old song speaks of, and that victory, and the need of constant opposition to her father, made her afterwards, at times, I could see, rather cross-grained, and even a little imperious and domineering. Yet there was such a world of tenderness and

love in her heart, and when she was happy (which wasn't often), such a lot of fun and mischief in her, and she kept on growing so pretty (prettier and prettier every year) with her beautiful auburn hair and bright blue eyes, that I don't wonder if any fellow lost his heart to her ten times over. I know it made mine ache that Sunday to hear that she and Davie regularly wrote to each other about once a month, and that he sent her beautiful verses of his own making, and paid for her letters as well as his own. And once when he came home, the pretty things he brought her, mother said was a sight of itself. For he was working somewhere down in Sussex then; and earning good wages, which he could do when he liked. He was one of the smartest hands for a mere practical that ever worked at a bench, and like to work now, it seems like a heart. But he had new training in what they call of it, any more than I was never thought about


So I tramped back to town in the dark, that Sunday night, and took to working pretty hard myself, not only in the shop, but after hours, reading every book I could buy or borrow, and studying in my poor way, and trying to understand ways of doing things at the bench ; for I began to see there was a right and a wrong way of doing most things. We had a good sort of foreman where I worked then, and he took rather a fancy to me, seeing I tried to get on, and put me up to some first-rate dodges, particularly in stair-casing jobs ; but he said he could have taught me a deal more if I had only known a little geometry. He used to swear at the English gentlefolks (behind the master's back) for not having poor folk better taught in this country, and would tell us what fine schools they had in Scotland, where he came from. He tried to teach me a little of what he knew, and lent me his books freely enough. But he was a good deal bothered with the state of the times, and all the troubles of the working classes and the poor ; and was often out

of an evening attending meetings of one kind or another. But he took me with him to these sometimes, and of all the good turns he did me, one of the best was when he took me one night to a sort of debating or discussion society, which had grown out of one Lovett had belonged to years before, in Gerrard Street, Soho. For the talk I listened to there made me see there were two sides to most questions, and that one mustn't be in too great a hurry to decide. I learned to think a deal more as I sat in that room, and the next day while my hands were busy, than ever I had done before. Besides, it made me read about the matters I heard discussed ; and as I never dreamed of attempting to speak myself, I listened to all sides impartially, and learnt to be more cautious, I think, than some of my mates, who were easily led away with a glib tongue and a lot of flashy talk about things they didn't understand. I know all this cut two ways, because sometimes, when I once have gone to the front and taken part in some agitation, I found I was

back, and almost deserved to be called a sneak, because I *would* look at the question on all sides, and couldn't make up my mind which was right. But this didn't often happen. We working men were much oftener swept off our legs by a common enthusiasm in those days and hurried along with the stream, than in danger of too much deliberateness and caution. I don't think the working classes are nearly so enthusiastic about anything now-a-days, good or bad, as they were then. But I'm not sure that's a wholesome sign.

One never-to-be-forgotten day, the 31st of May, 1837, this worthy man, whose name was Sandy Kelso, told me in the dinner-hour he was going to give me a treat. He knew how I longed to meet Wm. Lovett again and hear him talk, so he bid me get ready to go with him and he'd try to smuggle me in at a meeting to be held that evening at the British Coffee House, Cockspur Street. It was about three or four months after that gathering at the Crown and Anchor; and I should

think I was mightily pleased at the chance. So I waited under the statue at Charing Cross, as Kelso bid me, with my heart knocking against my ribs, till he came quietly up and told me to keep close alongside. It was a sort of feeling of awe with which I found myself in the crowded room among a number of working men, and face to face with eight live members of Parliament. But the tall Cornishman, I think, was more to me than all the rest, and from the corner into which Kelso let me squeeze myself, I heard, with immense satisfaction, Wm. Lovett introduce the business of the meeting according to the resolution of the "Working Men's Association," which had been formed the year before, and of which, I think, he was Secretary. That Association aimed at the general improvement, education, and enfranchisement of the working classes; and at the public meeting I went to in February, at the "Crown and Anchor," they proposed and carried a petition to Parliament for "universal suffrage at annual Parliaments, vote by ballot,



ment of members, no property qualification for members, and equal electoral districts." That petition was signed by about 3000 persons; and Mr. J. A. Roebuck, M.P., who was then one of the staunchest Radicals in the House of Commons, having consented to present it, and then to move a resolution in favour of universal suffrage, Lovett and his committee invited all whom they believed to be Radical M.P.'s to come to this meeting in Cockspur Street, and to say whether they would support Roebuck. Eight responded by their presence, and by degrees I found that they were Joseph Hume, whom I had been taught to reverence as the incarnation of incorruptible integrity and patriotism; Daniel O'Connell, the wonderful agitator and Irish "Liberator;" Dr. Bowring, since Sir John Bowring, a life-long friend of the people; J. T. Leader, Col. Thompson, the great pioneer of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation; Benjamin Hawes, afterwards Sir Benjamin; Wm. Sharman Crawford, afterwards a leader in the

“complete suffrage” movement; and Charles Hindley. While I was wondering not a little at a cabinet-maker having the audacity to address these great men as if he were their equal, yet quite respectfully, he requested them in turn to say what they were willing to do, to put their Radical principles into practice. But though one after another spoke, only Sharman Crawford and Leader appeared to go along with Lovett and his friends as thoroughly as he wished, and thereupon he took them to task in a surprising way. Then O’Connell got up and fired away at him so fiercely that at first I thought Lovett would have had to slink out of the room like a dog with his tail between his legs, and I felt very uncomfortable for him. But no, by George! for as soon as the great orator sat down, up jumped the leaders of the “Unstamped Press” movement, Hetherington, Cleave, Watson, “mighty men of valour,” with plenty both of tongue and cheek. Didn’t they speak out, and didn’t I chuckle in my corner to think what friends

Lovett had. Kelso looked round at me several times during the evening, his sharp Scotch face beaming with satisfaction and pride, and I winked and grinned at him, and cried "Hear, hear," lustily when I heard the others at it. The end of it all was that the meeting adjourned for a week, and then they all agreed to vote for a Bill to be brought into the House of Commons embodying nearly all that Lovett and others wanted. Then there was a committee of twelve persons appointed to draw up the Bill, consisting of six M.P.'s and six workmen, viz :—

D. O'Connell, M.P.	H. Hetherington.
J. A. Roebuck, „	J. Cleave.
J. T. Leader, „	J. Watson.
C. Hindley, „	R. Moore.
Col. Thompson,,	W. Lovett.
W. S. Crawford,,	H. Vincent.

And this was the origin of the celebrated People's Charter, which made noise enough, for a time, after that night.

It seemed a grand triumph for Lovett and his friends ; and Kelso, Rufford, and I, had

a very jolly evening with a few others at the "Bell," Old Bailey, on the strength of it. But before much progress could be made the king died, and Parliament was dissolved, and the committee couldn't meet again for some time.

The young man last named on the above list, Henry Vincent, was one of the very pluckiest little chaps I ever set eyes on. He seemed as if he had enough "go" in him to upset the whole House of Commons, and the aristocracy into the bargain, if they didn't work on the square as we bade them. I heard a good deal more about him afterwards, and so did the country at large, for a more telling speaker never got on a platform. Eloquent? I believe you! But it was his humour and satire that told on an audience, even more than his eloquence, except just at the end, and then after he had been speaking for two or three hours, and keeping everybody fixed in the closest attention or laughing consumedly, he'd wind up with a magnificent appeal made us all jump up and hurrah like

the moment he sat down. He was always in the front of the battle from this time till 1843, and did splendid service. He was very near getting into Parliament two or three times, twice at Tavistock and once at Ipswich, but unluckily for the people's good he never quite hit it. So at last he gave up politics altogether and took to professional lecturing, which enabled him to support his family, while politics didn't pay at all, neither for him nor for anybody else, I think, except scamps.

I tried hard now to understand what the row was all about, and one morning as I went to work I saw a lot of men standing round a great placard on the wall, which proved to be an "address" from the "Working Men's Association," drawn up by Lovett. It was very long, but very fine, and when I got to the shop I found Kelso had a number of copies which he was distributing. It made the matter pretty clear to most of us. The great Reform Bill, about which such a fuss has been made, wasn't of much use after all—the working

classes had given the middle and upper class hearty and generous support to carry it, though it didn't do much for them, and now that the great manufacturers and merchants and employers had got all the power they wanted, they turned a deaf ear to the just complaints of the people, and, not content with spurning their petition for political rights with contempt, as the address said, they were "binding them down with still more slavish enactments." But the people were not going to be done out of their rights in that way. Were they "to allow despotism to triumph?" No. "The people have now learnt," said the address, "a profitable lesson from experience, and will not again be stimulated to contend for any measure which excludes them from its advantages. They now perceive that most of our oppressive laws and institutions, and the consequent ignorance and wretchedness to which they are exposed, *can be traced to one common source—EXCLUSIVE LEGISLATION* and they therefore have their minds *fixed on the destruction of this gro*

pernicious monopoly ; being satisfied that while the power of law-making is confined to the few, the exclusive interests of the few will be secured at the expense of the many." Hence the Association urged on their "fellow-men the necessity of contending for political power as the most certain means of redressing all their wrongs," and there was the beginning of the great Chartist agitation. Several of the leading Radicals among the middle classes began to see, as I have shown, that the Reform Bill of 1832 had left the great bulk of the people as much at the mercy of the wealthy classes as (before the Reform Bill) all classes had been at the mercy of the borough-mongering aristocracy ; and even Mr. Attwood, M.P., the Birmingham patriot, who more than any single individual, perhaps, had helped to carry that Reform Bill,³ had begun, Mr. Lovett told us, to talk of it as being "nothing better

³ The Birmingham Political Union, of which he was the head, led the van, and roused the country at large, in the memorable struggle.

than a witch's bantling," and of the new set of borough-mongers as being little better than the old.

Of course we all welcomed this address with immense enthusiasm, and numbers hastened to enroll themselves in the association. By another address presented to the young queen on her accession we informed her Majesty and the country at large that out of a population of 25,000,000 of people only 800,000 had the power of electing the House of Commons, which we denounced in Lovett's eloquent language as "a flagrant act of injustice," and one that was the cause of indescribable want and wretchedness as well as ignorance and vice among the people. I began to feel desperately indignant with the Government and the governing classes, and especially with those whom O'Connell called "the base, bloody, and brutal Whigs," almost ready, in fact, to strike a blow with bludgeon or broadsword the moment word was given.

But neither Lovett nor any of his friends

were going to say that word. They always denounced the folly of attempting to get by force the reform they demanded, and spoke sternly enough to any of us who even hinted that physical force might be necessary. For some time I couldn't understand that. I had heard it was the display of physical force alone that made the peers, and the Iron Duke and the King himself give way and pass the Reform Bill; so why should it not pass the People's charter?

One night there was a grand discussion on the political situation of the times at the Debating Society I spoke of before, and I got some new light then on the subject. After a very able introductory speech by one of our best men, I think it was either Hetherington or Vincent, a young barrister (of the Middle Temple, I think they said), got up and declared that folks who denounced the Reform Bill and the Whigs in the supposed interests of the working classes didn't know what they were talking about. He showed what a wonderful deal

that Act had done to break the power of class tyranny in the United Kingdom, and how many great reforms had already come out of it, especially Municipal Reform, which had given self-government to nearly all the towns of any size in the country. He didn't deny that much remained to be done, and that a further extension of the Franchise was necessary, but it was to be got, like all other reforms, gradually, and by peaceable agitation, and keeping in with friends like the Whigs, who had helped us before, and would again, if we didn't make enemies of them by foolish talk and black-guarding them. As for the Reform Bill having been carried at last by fear of physical force he thought that was pretty true. Birmingham and the Midland counties, to say nothing of the North, were, no doubt, ready to march on London, "but," said he, with huge emphasis, "what would their marching have done if the Government hadn't found that they couldn't depend on the soldiery? It was Alexander Somerville and the Scots Greys."

quartered in Birmingham) that really carried the Reform Bill, gentlemen; and don't you tell me we are going to have the troops on our side again for a quarter of a century yet. I tell *you*, any appeal to arms by the working classes alone would end in your all being blown into rags before the week's out, and you haven't got the middle classes with you now, remember that."

"More shame for them!" cried a number of voices, "we worked to get them their Reform Bill, and it's a —— shame if they don't help us now!"

"Gently, John, over the stones," said my young lawyer in a mild, determined sort of way, not a bit put out. "Don't you see, gentlemen, they are rather afraid of you just now, so they daren't trust you with votes, and you've got to show them you are all such sensible, fair-play chaps, and so well-educated, that they needn't fear to see you get political power; then they'll vote for your five points, or anything else you like to ask for." But it was no good. They didn't like his calling them "chaps,"

nor the smile on his face, though it was all meant good-humouredly, I fancy ; and they didn't like his hinting they ought to be better educated before they had a vote, and altogether they made such a row, and were so fierce and unfair as I thought, that it made me a deal more inclined to believe he might be right ; for, said I to myself, they wouldn't go on like that if they had any better arguments. Kelso was vexed with them, and said it was only a few unruly members, and then he showed me how conduct like that only proved that their education and training had been shamefully neglected by the governing classes, and that if they were not to have the suffrage till they were better educated they might wait till doomsday. "It's a foul shame," he cried, stopping under a lamp-post in his excitement as we went up Gray's Inn Road, "to tell working men they're not fit for political power because they're ignorant and uneducated, and yet to keep them without free schools, and to ply them with public-houses and these accursed be-

shops on every side. I tell you what it is, Master Woodford"—and then catching me by the arm, he strode on at a great pace,—"the gentlefolks will never care to give the working classes good and cheap schooling until they *do* get political power. You mark my words." But he told me afterwards there was a lot of truth in what the lawyer said about the Reform Bill, and the good it had done, and getting improvements gradually, and by persuasion, but that Lovett and his party never dreamt of using physical force.

When I told Rufford all that had passed, and what each man had said, he coolly answered, "Yes, yes, it's all true, but some of it's rubbish, and yet true; but the lords, and the squires, and the M.P.'s want a deal o' education too; aye, full as much as the working men, young fellow, and it's because they are so infernally badly brought up, without more notion of their duties than my hammer, that things go to the devil, and we working men have to pay the piper!"

CHAPTER IV.

NED RUFFORD was a very sharp, long-headed tyke, and let me in for a lot of clever dodges, and showed me the ways of the world in a surprising manner. But Sandy Kelso was a better guide for me than Rufford; he had a deal more principle, and more book-learning, besides being able to get me on in my trade. It was a bad day for me when he got the sack, after I had been at Grapnell's about ten months, and I never rightly understood why he had to go, but he always thought it was because he didn't *drive* the hands enough. I know he was a first-rate workman himself, knew twice as much as the man who got his place, and who was always a-nagging us if we weren't sweating ourselves to death.

Now, you can't get real good work out of a workman in any trade, I don't care what it is, if he feels all day long as if the devil were behind him with a rope's end in his tongue and a time-book in his hand, so that you daren't look round or hardly draw a long breath, but what you know the foreman or master is saying to himself, "Curse that lazybones! Why can't he keep to his work!" Good work must be done with a cheery heart, with a sort of love for it, taking a pleasure and pride in it, like; and you'll never have that feeling with a slave-driver at your back.

But then, I know there's another side to the story. In our shop, as in most, I suppose, there were some precious lazy chaps, who often scamped their work when they thought it wouldn't be spotted, and fellows of this kidney *must* be driven, and looked after pretty sharply, too. So I suppose the best thing is to weed them out by degrees, and get as good a lot together as you can, and then, with a foreman like

Mr. Kelso, you may work the coach by much better motives than fear of the slave-driver or the sack, and get the men each to do his best for you, which the right sort of men will do gladly enough when they find you value good work and mean to do the best you can for them. Leastways, that's what I've found to be true, first as man and then as master. But then there are very few men who get decently taught their trade now-a-days. There's nobody to teach an apprentice. The lads when they come into the shop have to pick it up as best they can; the sharp ones learn, and those who can "treat" an old workman get many a wrinkle; but the common run don't learn much for a long time, and then they only get hold of the lower branches of their trade. No fellow can care much for doing things well, and in a workmanlike manner, when he knows that he's only a bit of scamped work himself. All this is as much against the employer and the customer as it is against the workman, and the waste of stuff, as well as of time, is

immense. I remember old Grapnell coming into the shop one morning, swearing like a trooper because there were half a dozen of us with our hands in our pockets. "What the devil," he cried, "are you idling about here for?" "Waiting for the foreman to set out our work, sir," said one of the men, as sullenly as you please.

"Pretty lot you must be," grumbled the old man, "if there isn't one among you can do that." Kelso came up just then, and as Mr. Grapnell turned away, he said to us, "Aye, but the maister 'ud have to pay you rather mair, my boys, if you could set out your work without waiting for me." This set me a-thinking, and the end of it was Kelso undertook for "a sma' conseederation" to teach me drawing and "jome-try." I liked his lessons, and worked away o' nights pretty hard. But as I was saying, he himself soon after got discharged, and I lost my teacher, but I worked on as I best could, which wasn't saying much. I never was over quick at anything. But I got some good from attending classes at

the Mechanics' Institute, in Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane.

It was a great misfortune losing Kelso; bad in my trade, and bad for me outside. For he didn't get another berth at once—trade was very slack then—and so he soon went back to Edinburgh. Rufford, however, was always friendly, and took more notice of me than was to be expected, considering he was full ten years older. But he couldn't teach me anything in my trade; he didn't care for reading, except the weekly newspaper; and his talk wasn't always of the cleanest, nor his ways either. In fact, to speak plain, he'd have done me a great deal of harm if I hadn't been blessed with a decent father and mother, and thought so much of Maggie Thatcher. As it was, he rather helped me to keep out of the dirt, for he frightened me rarely with all his hospital stories, and what he called his "experiences," and though I didn't want that kind of help much then, yet in after-times when temptation came on me much worse than it did then, it was of great use

to me. Others have told me it was the same with them. But it's my belief if a young fellow is brought up decently and carefully he'll be as modest and pure as a young maid, and won't let nasty talk take hold of him. After a little time, when Rufford found I didn't make that kind of thing welcome, he very seldom brought it up, or tried to get me into his own way of living. In fact, I remember well his telling me one night, and letting his pipe go out while he talked, as we strolled round Copenhagen Fields, he thought I had the best of it, and he should try and turn over a new leaf. I believe he did, too. But habit is a strong master, for good or for evil.

The style in which Lovett and his friends were trying to push their plans, may be seen in the following extract from a first-rate address drawn up by him and issued by the "Working Men's Association" to their "working-class brethren in America." After congratulating them on much that was good in their institutions, and blaming quite as frankly what seemed unworthy in their con-

duct, the address continues thus: "We seek to generate *a moral stamina in the ranks of the millions*, and accordingly make moral conduct the test of membership, convinced as we are that a drunken, a dissipated, and an immoral people will never attain to political and social greatness; that, whatever may be the form of their government, they will be the slaves of their own vices, and consequently the fitting slaves of others.

"Feeling satisfied that true liberty, its obligations and duties, are never appreciated by the ignorant, we seek to instruct ourselves and fellows in all that regards our political and social rights. To that end we seek to establish *libraries* of the best and choicest works appertaining to man and society. We seek to promote conversations, discussions, and public meetings among us, and thus not only make the sons of labour acquainted with their rights, but qualify them also to carry their knowledge into practice.


"We seek to make the mothers of our children fit instructors for promoting our

social and political advancement, by reading to and conversing with them on all subjects we may be acquainted with; and thus by kindness and affection to make them our equal companions in knowledge and happiness, and not, as at present, mere domestic drudges and the ignorant slaves of our passions.”¹

When I heard Kelso reading aloud that address to a number of our men, and particularly this part of it, I thought more than ever what a blessing it was for our class to have such men at our head; and I expected to see a wonderful change before long come over the manners and ways of all working men. Fancy my astonishment when I heard Kelso saying to the foreman of another shop, as, on a later night, he finished reading it to him and a select lot of what you may call upper-class hands at the “Carpenters’ Arms,” Somers Town, “Well, what do you think of William Lovett

¹ There was also another fine “Address to the working classes” on the subject of education, drawn up by him, and issued by the Association in 1887, but from which I haven’t room to quote here.

now?" "Think!" said the foreman, after a puff or two, "why, that he's a regular prig,"—and then the others only laughed, and one of them said, "Aye, he's as full of conceit as a Scotch haggis of stale meat." Kelso drew off in a silent rage, but he wasn't so angry and disappointed as I was. I knew better than to be disappointed in later days, for I have always found that if any one of our class tried to raise the rest there were plenty ready to pull him down, and daub him with mud into the bargain. Not that men like Lovett cared a rush for what was said of them; but the mischief is when a great party, like that which Lovett and Co., were trying to organize for social and political improvement, are taught by jealous backbiters to sneer at and distrust the best men among them. They must have leaders of some sort, and Englishmen seem to me to have a fine readiness to honour merit where they find or *think* they find it. But English workmen are confoundedly ready, also, to suspect all who want to help them, and to be



jealous of men of their own class who show what Kelso called "climbing" and "governing power." Heaven knows they have had reason enough to suspect and distrust any who profess to be their friends. But why they should be so abominably jealous of their own natural leaders I never could understand, and shall always think it a mean side of their character. The mischief that came out of all this sort of feeling in that Chartist movement we shall see plainly enough by-and-by. But I have given all those long bits from Lovett's addresses not only because of the honour I feel for the man himself, but to show what chances my fellow-workmen had in those days, and what Lovett would have led them on to if they would only have followed him. If they didn't take the chance, and if they let knaves and fools come betwixt them and him, that was their look-out, and a shame and a sorrow it was to them for many a day.

But in the time I'm now speaking of, though foremen, and ambitious would-be

leaders, and drinking coves sneered at this fine Cornish cabinet-maker, the great bulk of the regular workmen, especially in London, trusted and respected him thoroughly. It was only when he came to be widely known as the author of the People's Charter, and the principal man in a movement which began to take large dimensions, that jealousy on the one side, and the dirty ambition of vain, selfish men on the other, clipped his power of helping on either our enfranchisement or education. There were a good many of this colour in the Chartist ranks, but I think Lovett would have held his own fairly against them, and shaped the movement on the right lines, but for the amazing influence gained by one man, who, I'm bold to say, and I say it deliberately after forty years' consideration, did more harm to the working men's political and social well-being than half a dozen Lovetts could repair; more, in fact, than any dozen traitors or enemies of the people all put together.

How I came to see into that matter



pretty easily was this wise. I had of course joined the Working Men's Association as soon as Kelso proposed it to me ; and one night before he left London (I remember it as though it were yesterday) after a public dinner at White Conduit House, given to some Radical M.P.'s, where Lovett had made an eloquent speech, and I, having been taken in by Kelso after the cloth was drawn, had been cheering him till I was hoarse, Kelso brings me quietly up to the platform, and says he in a whisper, " Now, my boy, wouldn't you like to be introduced to the author of the People's Charter ? " Well, my tongue stuck to my mouth, and I was so glad I could hardly thank him, when I found myself being led up to Mr. Lovett, and heard Kelso saying, " Here, Mr. Lovett, here's a young Chartist carpenter, who's a great respect for you and the Charter, and wants to deserve your respect and that of the Association." Then I remember the tall, broad-shouldered man looking me full in the face for a moment or two with his great brown, serious eyes,

and taking me by the hand, I heard him say to me, slowly, yet heartily, "If you'll do your duty by the Charter and the Association, young man, you may depend on it we'll all respect you—a deal more, may be, than you'll deserve, for we don't do things here by halves, do we, Alexander Kelso?" and then he gave a pleasant little (very little) bit of a laugh. Then I remember blundering out something about his being my leader and chief, and how I should serve *him*, and his taking me up with, "No, no, young fellow, we don't want leaders and chiefs among working men. Do your duty, and serve your fellow-countrymen, and don't trouble your head about me." Then I heard him telling Kelso how angry a certain Mr. Feargus O'Connor, an Irish barrister, was, because their committee had invited Daniel O'Connell to the dinner. "Why," said Kelso, "I've heard Feargus in former days declare he was only a joint in O'Connell's tail!" "Aye," said Lovett, "but Dan didn't wag his tail so as to make Feargus part of the

head ; and so they've quarrelled, and I begin to have my doubts about both of them."

After that night Mr. Lovett generally gave me a kind nod when he noticed me at the meetings, and seeing me hang about his table, he would sometimes give me a job to do here and there, which sent me home as gay as a lark.

CHAPTER V.

I THINK it was somewhere about this time I heard two of our men talking together one evening, just as they went out of shop after work, about something that made me mighty curious. "Oh! Mr. Trimmins," said I, "do let us go with you." "Look sharp then, my lad;" and I just ran home, got my tea, and by eight o'clock I was going with them into a coffee-house near Battlebridge.¹ There was a large number of rather roughish-looking customers crowded into the room, and at the further end whom should I see but Ned Rufford in the chair. I thought it strange he hadn't told me of the meeting, nor offered to take me to it; but afterwards


¹ Now called "King's Cross," I don't know why. The old name, I've heard say, was a history.



I saw plain enough he didn't want me there, partly because I was one of "Lovett's lot," and partly, I think, because he didn't want to get me into trouble. Well, he was explaining, to the great discontent of his audience, how that Alexander Somerville, formerly a private in the Scots Greys, at the last moment had declined to attend the meeting (and, as I learned afterwards, because he didn't like the nature of it). "But," cried the chairman, as murmurs and more outspoken anger were beginning to make confusion, "but—(now can't you be quiet and listen, gentlemen)—*but*, I'm glad to say here's another friend who was also in the Scots Greys, and he's not so squeamish, and he'll tell us all about how it went once, in the barracks at Birmingham when the bloody-minded Tories wanted to massacre *us* as they did the Manchester folks with their yeomanry at Peterloo! Here, gentlemen, is Mr. Stirling, late of the Scots Greys." Then the room rang with cheers, which were renewed more and more vociferously, as a tall,

soldierly-looking man rose from beside the chairman, making a military salute, and then a bow, and when at last silence came, he began in a clear, quiet voice :—


“I think, Sir, you want me to tell you how the Reform Bill came to be carried at last. Well, mates, I believe it was our regiment that carried it. (*Applause.*) You know we were quartered in Birmingham at that time o’ day, and the Birmingham Political union numbered about 60,000 members, and all the principal towns in England had formed unions like theirs. They had all had great meetings, but the biggest were at Birmingham. So when news came down by the night coaches (and rare crowds were waiting for them as they came in every morning !) that the House of Lords had thrown out the Reform Bill, and that Earl Grey’s ministry had resigned, their numbers went up to above 100,000. Placards were issued in London, saying, ‘To stop the Duke, run for gold!’—that meant, you know, mates, ‘Empty the Bank of England’s money-chest’



(*laughter*,) and they say that in one week, more than a million of sovereigns were drawn in small sums for bank-notes. I should like to have seen the faces of the directors while their clerks were shelling out the yellow-boys, eh! (*Much laughter, and clapping of hands.*)

“Well, the next thing we heard was that the men from the North were to come down South, and the Birmingham Union, with I don’t know how many more, were going to march on London, and camp out on Hampstead Heath, and that we were to be ordered out the night before on to the London road to stop their march. We knew what that meant; but if we hadn’t, the meaning would have been plain enough on Sunday the 13th of May, 1832, when we were all of us set to grinding our sabres, because it was said the people were to begin walking next day. Now my friend who was to have talked to you a bit to-night, and he ’ud ha’ done it a deal better than I”—(“No, no! Bravo! Go on, my man!”)—“and who’s as fine a fellow as

ever put foot in stirrup-iron, and a true friend of the people"—("Why didn't he come here to-night?")—"Well, he never said he would. But it was he stopped the Scots Greys from murdering the Birmingham unionists—leastways, he took the lead; but I know there weren't twenty of us had any stomach for the work, and perhaps we shouldn't have gone even if Somerville hadn't told us privately his mind about it. But he *did* tell us on the quiet, first one and then the other. So first thing on that Sunday morning, I remember, I was rubbing down my nag, and one of our corporals, Donald —— (no I won't give his real name)—came into the stable (Corporal Trim we used to call him, for he was always so spruce), and says he, 'I say, Master Stirling, we shall have to go down among the people in real earnest after all.' (You see it had often been talked about before.) 'Eh?' says I, looking up rather scared. 'Yes,' says he, 'I heard captain talking to our sergeant-major last night; and says he, those black-



guard unionists are d——d impudent, and are going to walk up to London on Monday, and it won't do ; and the magistrates have had a hint from the Home Office, and they and the colonel have had a talk about it, and it's all settled. The fellows want a little blood-letting.' So when corporal had finished, I gave a good whistle, and began rubbing down my horse again." (The crowded meeting had been listening like one man, and here they relieved their feelings with a bit of a laugh, then there was dead silence again, and the soldier went on.) "So presently corporal says under his breath, 'And what do you think of that, my boy?' 'Think!' says I, softly, 'why I think—if we were ordered to charge the Brummagem boys—I think—our horses would shy.'" (The meeting burst out into a roar of laughter, with cries of bravo ! and immense clapping of hands and cheers that might have been heard half a mile off.) "Aye, you laugh, my mates, and so did our corporal—roared like a good 'un, he did. 'D'ye think all

our horses would shy, then?' he added. 'Well,' says I, 'looking at the colour of their manes (*great laughter*), that's my belief, corporal.' 'Aye, aye, you *mane* the same as I do,' says he. I told you he was a smart young chap; and then he turned towards the stable-door, saying, 'Well, I'd a deal rather they did shy, Harry, than—you know what. But it won't do to say so.' 'Course not, corporal.' 'Tho' we are soldiers we arn't slaves, nor a-going to make our countrymen such. Why, as Sandy Somerville says, If a beggarly French trooper knows better than that'—he was thinking, mates, you see of 1830—'I should think a free-born Briton might.' (*Great applause.*) Just then the sergeant-major walks into the stable, looking rather suspicious and sulky, so we shut up, but I rather think our officers and the Iron Duke himself heard something about the feelings of the men, and poor Somerville was made scape-goat and got his three dozen lashes, and was drummed out of the regiment. He was true a martyr for the good cause.

as ever roasted at Smithfield, but the long and the short of it was that the Duke found that he couldn't trust either the London police, the yeomanry, or the troops, and least of all our bonny Scots Greys!" (Three rattling cheers for the Scots Greys followed.) "And so you see the Reform Bill was carried, and that's how it all came about." ("But what's the good of it now we've got it?" shouted half-a-dozen voices.) "Ah, there it is. We want a deal more than that, and it's a thundering shame if you can't get it—and I hoped Somerville was the man that would have led you on—but somehow *his* horse has shied now, and though I'm no longer in the ranks, (not drummed out, mind ye—got my discharge all reg'lar,) yet may be I could help you a bit, and all the better for having been in the Scots Greys." Here the cheers began again, and in the midst of it we found a desperate scuffle going on near the door, and cries of "Spy! Spy! Government Spy! Turn him out!" The soldier and Rufford looked uncommonly serious, and

there was some talk of breaking up the meeting. Instead of that, however, the leading men with their friends made a rough sort of scrutiny, and everybody who wasn't known to somebody who *was* known got a civil request to bolt, and if he didn't he got something else, which sent him not very quietly outside and over the stairs. Then the remainder talked in low earnest tones about what was to be done to get the Charter carried—and there was a deal of talk about street fightings, and Colonel Macerone, and eight-foot pikes, and things I didn't like to hear about, and angry complaints because Lovett wouldn't hear of fighting in any shape; and then some of them cried up Feergus O'Connor, and said that he was the boy to lead them; and then there were many who spoke, in the same style, of Julian Harney and Bronterre O'Brien, and a lot more.

I rather think some of these were at the meeting, but I didn't know 'em by sight then, and there wasn't much light of any kind, and I more than ever wished I were

safe out of it, for I didn't like a deal of what I heard, nor their blaming Lovett ; so I declared to myself, as I got outside the door, I'd go to no more of these meetings unless Lovett was going too ; but said I to myself (and at the time I meant it too), " I'll follow him through thick and thin—through gaol doors, or a hundred bobbies, or red-coats either ! "

But I knew he'd like to hear all I could tell him, so I took some notes which I was always rather handy at, and I got some of my mates to help me afterwards with what they could remember about it.

All of a sudden, as I was stumbling along the dark passage and over the threshold into the open air, I felt my arm grasped, and some one whispered " Come along, Jem, I want to speak a word with you." I thought I knew the voice, but it was so strained and harsh I didn't believe it could be my pal, till we came under the gas-light, and then I saw it was Davie Roberts, and no mistake. We grasped each other's hands, for I know we were main glad to

meet again, both of us, but his face was thin, and he looked so fierce and queer, I should hardly have guessed him to be the same young chip that used to look so smiling and spruce on Sundays at Broadfield. So a'most the first thing I said was, "Why, Davie, what makes you look as if you'd been to a bull-baiting?" "It's just that," said he, "I have been seeing our agricultural labourers baited worse than bulls or badgers either, and our reg'lar mechanics are not used much better, and I can't stand it no longer. That's the kind of talk, my boy, we've just been hearing that'll do us good. We *must* come to that at last!" "To what?" I asked, and he answered with a vicious swing of his stick, and I gave a long whistle.

"Now don't you be a white-livered cur, Jem," said he, and I turned upon him rather sharp. "No offence, mate," he added, "but can't you see what the Government's driving at? Have you forgotten the Manchester Massacre? or the Dorchester labourers? Don't you know how

they're driving the farm-labourers to beggary, and their blasted Bastilles, and don't you see—*don't you feel it in your bones*—that they'll be down on our Workman's Associations before long, and then on our Trades Unions, and make us worse slaves than ever those chaps were on the 'par-le-voo' side of the water?"

"May be I see all the bad the beggars are after as well as you do," said I. "But I've heard all about Oliver the spy, and about a good many more blackguards of his kidney, and I'm confoundedly mistaken if there warn't one or two of 'em there to-night. And what's more, I don't believe, not for a moment, that you or Julian Harney, or half-a-dozen ex-privates of the Scots Greys, and, least of all, that big blethering Irishman, what's his name—O'Connor? are going to bring the Government over to the side of fair-play, and justice for all."


"And so you're going to put up with it all; and not stir a finger to help save our class from slavery?"

"Nay, not so fast, friend Davie. I am stirring all my fingers, and all my brains too, and I've got a good leader to work under, and if you'll come with me to-morrow night I'll take you to Mr. Lovett, and he'll show you what's to do." (Didn't I feel a bit proud at thinking I could introduce a fine young fellow like Davie to my hero.)

"Oh, bother William Lovett!" cried Davie. "It's all cursed nonsense to think you're going to make either Whigs or Tories listen to your smooth-speaking blarney. I tell you it's only muskets and pikes that'll ever make a lord, or a son of a lord, or any one as knows a lord, do justice to jack-planes, hob-nails, and mortar-boards."

But I was getting cross: so that we mightn't fall out just when we'd met, I said, "But, Davie, do you mean you've left your work down at Horsham—or has it left you?"

"No; I've thrown it up. I couldn't stay down in that hole while all this was



going on; so I gave them notice, for I'd saved a bit there—as well as the publicans would let me; and then they offered to raise my wages. And didn't they slang me for going, just when they were so throng of work—two contracts on hand, Jem! But I told them working men had been slaves too long, and our turn was coming now. So we didn't part very good friends, you see, and I needn't go to them for a character. And now I'll go for political reform or revolution!"

CHAPTER VI.

I CAUTIONED him to keep his bloodthirsty designs to himself, and hinted there was a Peeler within ear-shot, carefully watching us, and then after a minute or two I said, "And was this all that brought you up to town, 'Davie?'" "Not quite," says he, jauntily, to hide a bit of shamefacedness. "You're a deep one, Jem,—and you know—of that little birdie as I want some day to bring to my nest when I've got one. I didn't half like being so far away, and she with such a brute of a father. . . Ah, Jem, if I could only get her away at once from that cursed place into that snug little home of my own, maybe I'd leave the brutal Government to itself for a bit longer." . . Here I lost all

patience, and broke out in a way that made him stare. "Devil take you, Roberts, are you mad? Why, she's hardly seventeen, and you aren't twenty! Don't 'ee know all these early marryings are the curse of our class, and do more to keep us under the masters' thumb than all the bad Governments, and lords, and bully-ragging capitalists that ever were spawned? Stupid nonsense! Talk of marrying! . . ."

It was true enough what I said in my rage, but I don't know if I should have been so certain of it if he hadn't been courting poor Maggie Thatcher. However, I said it, and he looked at me rather hard, and answered pretty sharply; so we might have quarrelled, but we were too good friends for that, and sweetened up before we parted, when he said, "Well it's no good if I did want her to marry straight away, for I know she won't leave her poor mother for all the lovers who ever came caterwauling. And I know she didn't ought to, Jem. I will say that. But I

should like to get her away from that old reprobate's company—I should—and maybe I shall some day; but I went down last Sunday, and gave it all up for the present. But, by George, it was hard parting. When that girl *does* smile on you, or when she looks so sorrowful, it's enough to turn you inside out—and I don't know where I am." (I couldn't help wishing she didn't know or care either, for I felt quite wild, but I kept it to myself. So he went on.) "She was very sweet and pleasant, you see, at first, but by-and-by, when I tried to get a promise out of her and talked about settling, she cut up uncommon rough, and gave me a deal of sauce, Jem, which I didn't altogether stomach. She axed me if I had ever had a mother myself, and whether I should be for leaving a dear good ailing woman like her all alone to the mercies of such a husband, because if I would she didn't think I should make a pattern husband myself at all; . . . and so we parted, with stinging words and rather sore hearts, it may be, and in a h

pet . . . so there's an end of that for the present. . . But lor', Jemmy, what business have any of us to go spooneying about after the girls, when every man Jack of us is wanted for tough work like this," and he clenched his great stick and again shook it in the air. We gripped each other's hand, and parted. I felt for him on more scores than one when I heard how he had left Maggie Thatcher, for I knew he must have been very unhappy since, and that made him look so ill-starred and queer. But there was one thing I didn't like. I happened to ask after little "Puss-in-boots," whether he had seen her or any other of our old school-fellows; and he coloured up and looked away, and answered rather awkward like, as it seemed to me, which struck me at the time because I usedn't to like the way in which he would sometimes joke and romp with her. I knew the girl thought a deal of him, and was jealous of Maggie, so I was vexed when I found she had been looking out for him after he had parted

with Maggie Thatcher, and had even come a bit of the way with him towards London. But I don't know how anybody could help loving Davie Roberts—for a time, at least—let alone a soft-hearted wench like poor Kitty.

Next night, as we left work, the street was full of the news, which came among us like a bombshell, that Rufford had been arrested with two or three others who had been at the meeting the night before, and that the soldier had escaped just in time. I ran as hard as I could to Davie's lodgings to see if he were all safe. There I found he had been "sent for" early that morning, and when I got to the Clerkenwell Police Court, all out of breath and anxious, I soon heard that he had been sent off in the prison van, under remand, with Rufford and half-a-dozen more. I got sight of them for a few minutes next day, by losing half a day at the shop, and getting their solicitor to take me in, and found there was very little danger for Davie because he hadn't actually spoken at the meeting,

though he tried hard, he told me, to get a chance; but he had been watched, and something of what he said to me afterwards was brought up against him by the policeman whom I noticed. So he was marched off along with the rest, and I found from their talk and what the solicitor said that it was likely to go hard with Rufford, at all events. So some of us set to work, raised a fund, and got a "talking man" to defend our unlucky mates. It was Mr. Parry, afterwards Serjeant Parry, and a fine true-hearted man, as he always showed himself. We lost a deal of time and spent a lot of money over this business, for we knew our mates were smarting for the working classes all the world over, and I nearly got the sack for leaving work so often. But it was all to no purpose.

There was a deal of bad feeling against Rufford already among the employers, who said he was a scheming fellow, trying to set his fellow-workmen against them, and that he had laid a plot to get a strike through all the engineers' shops in London.


Whether this was true, I can't say, but it was sworn to by one or two of the witnesses, and I'm pretty sure it helped to make the jury look at him as a dangerous revolutionary fellow. I may have been wrong there, but at all events he and another chap were convicted of sedition, and got a year's imprisonment with hard labour. Davie and the rest were discharged with a caution; and when Davie had got clear of the crowd who were cheering him and the others, and groaning and hooting judge and jury, and, above all, the witnesses (two of them whom the mob fixed on as spies were near being lynched), he took my arm and squeezed it like a vice.

"The blasted liars!" he began under his breath, but I mustn't give all the epithets with which we working men used to garnish our remarks when we were angry. "The —— tyrants," he went on, "mean to squelch us under their hoofs as if we were vipers—and by G—d they shall live to see what it is to make us turn. If they will have civil war, it shall come,

Jemmy—it shall come !” It made it worse for my friend Roberts that he couldn’t get work at first when he came back to town, and so he had more time to think of political wrongs and to busy himself about the Chartist agitation. Not but what his and every other man’s help was wanted, Heaven knows, but want of work always makes a fellow better disposed for evil thoughts, and poor Davie took a more bitter view of things than even I could quite go with. And the worst of it was that this made him a worshipper of O’Connor instead of Lovett, and I felt sure mischief would come of it in some way or other. It made me right angry sometimes, as well as miserable, to think how a fine, high-spirited, kind-hearted fellow like him was throwing himself away.

Before long, however, there was room for another hand in our shop, and I spoke to the foreman, and Davie was taken on. But I almost wished it had been somewhere else, for there was a great bullying fellow in it who always drank hard at night, and

used to come in a precious bad humour next morning. One Monday morning nothing would please him, and one of the apprentices in particular was unlucky enough to have to wait on him, and was always getting jawed and cuffed. When we were going out to dinner some said the poor lad made a saucy jest at his tyrant, as he was rushing off out of his way, which he might well feel inclined to do. But whether he did or not the bully swore he did, and, catching him by the collar of his jacket, declared he'd teach him better manners and pay him off for all his cheek when in the shop. He had just struck savagely at the boy, who dodged the blow, and he was going to aim another, and I was thinking what I would do, for he was half a head taller and a lot older than me, when Davie steps up, cool as a cucumber, catches his arm, and says "Let the lad be, mate. He worn't so much to blame—and fair play's a jewel." Then the chap turns on Davie, who off with his coat in a trice when he sees what's coming, and they have a reg'lar



set-to. A ring was made, and all the men kept quiet lest the "bobby" should hear. Well, the fight went on for two or three minutes, and I can tell you a deal of hard hitting may be done in that time—it's not like the fight when the "Fancy" go at it with their slow, careful watching. In a street fight when men's blood is up they think a deal more about hitting than guarding; and when our fellows saw the blood flowing fast, and some of them cried out that it was a shame to let it go on, I saw the chance was come, and shouted "Part 'em! part 'em! There'll be one o' them tried for manslaughter!" But others swore no milksops should spoil sport, and wouldn't let the rest stop 'em. So then I remember I tucked up my sleeves, and stepped into the ring, and said to the two at work, "Now mates, this won't do. The bobbies 'll be here directly, and whoever strikes next blow will have to fight me too." Then there was a fierce roar among those who were for the smashing to go on, but the others took heart and held them


back, while Davie drew back a bit, precious well bruised, wiping his crimson face, but having done his part like a man, and the big bully turned on me. But he soon found I was fresh, and he was fagged; so after a few rounds he swore savagely and drew off. One of his backers gave him a knee, for he was like to faint, and I half carried Davie into the "Pig and Whistle" hard by. But the apprentice lad had got off, and was put under another master from that day, and had a considerably easier time of it, while Davie and I were better friends than ever, and the bully was a deal better behaved.

Of course I went to see Rufford while he was in gaol, though it cost me half a day's pay each time because of the hours, and as the warder stood by there wasn't much comfort to either of us, I thought. But he said it did him good, so I went when I could. The first time I went I remember as if it were yesterday, that he had something heavy on his mind, and yet he like to speak. But the next time

so eager and restless, and he looked so wild that I thought his prison life was driving him mad. "Jem," says he, "will ye do me a bit of a favour?" "Aye," says I, "if I can, and welcome. You want a doctor, don't you?" "No, no," he snaps me up, sharp like: "I'm none the better for this accursed treatment; but it 'aint that. Look here, old pal. There's a poor girl living down in Pinnock's Rents, Baldwin's Gardens, you know where—named Caddy. I don't know her other name, or whether she has one. I wish you'd look her up, and give her a trifle to help keep her straight and a bit of food in her. She wasn't one of your altogether virtuous sort, you know, but after we know'd one another I believe she was true to me, poor thing—and she never had a chance of being much better. A pretty, gentle young thing, and a cough on her chest, and not a friend in the world, God help her! Many a time we've sat on a doorstep, far on in a summer night, talking of what a queer world it is, and all we wanted to see put to rights

—and I told her at last I'd marry her, and the poor thing sobbed in my arms till I thought she'd ha' fainted. And then you see, Jem, came this blasted business—and I saw her pale face and crying eyes in the crowd round the Old Bailey. I was glad she'd know why I didn't come to see her again. But I'm afeared she'll be starving, or worse—may-be, dying of that cough. . .” “I'll go straight,” said I, “depend on that, old fellow, and give her all I've got.” “God bless you,” said he, “you'll see every penny of it back again when I come out—and I'll tell 'ee what, Jem—see if you can't get my watch and Sunday togs from the old cat where I lodged, and pawn them if you find the girl hasn't any work. Don't take the tools,” said he, as I went out, “I can't spare them.”

So I went to my lodgings, got all the cash I could, and went to the wretched hole called Pinnock's Rents. But it was only to see the dead face of the girl Rufford loved with all the love, I suppose, he had got in



his heart. Starvation and cough had done their work. She had died that morning, and there she lay on her truckle bed, second-pair back, with a pink flush still on her young thin cheeks, very fair and sweet-looking, and I thought—suppose she had been my own sister. But *somebody* beside Rufford must have loved her once—and then, I think my eyes got so moist I could hardly see my way down the steep narrow stair. It was a sorrowful message to take to poor Rufford, and the whole affair made me think a deal about these poor girls, and what could be done for them, and how this sort of thing can be put a stop to. It seems strange in a city like London, with so many Christian folks about. But the men are most to blame.

When I told Rufford he didn't speak—couldn't, I think. At last he cursed himself for not sending me to her when I first came to the prison, and groaned, and wrung my hand. I couldn't get the sight of his face or hers out of my mind for many a day. "Starvation!" said he, at last. "Poor Caddy. True to the last."

I longed more than I need say to see Maggie Thatcher now and then, if it were only to pass a word with her and see her bright eyes smiling, as it seemed, and just to know she were pretty happy as things go. But I felt it was better to keep away, so even when I went down to father and mother for a Sunday afternoon I didn't go near her. And this made me not like going to Broadfield, and I think, now, it fretted poor mother not seeing me oftener, and I hoped she guessed the reason. I did meet Maggie, though, where I little dreamt of it. And somebody else too.

I had been sent to a fine house a little way out of town, down Acton way (called Fountain Hall, if I remember right), to fit up scenery and that sort of thing for some private theatricals, as they called it, which the fine ladies and gentlemen were going to amuse themselves with. As I came through a passage and passed an open door, there sat Maggie in the room stitching away for her life at some of their finery for the following evening's performance;

and seeing her there, looking so neat and bright, says I, "Why, Maggie! who'd ha' thought of seeing you here?" She looked up with all her old saucy fun, "And what business have you in this fine place, Master Jem, I should like to know?" So we had a few minutes' chat, and with a deal of blushing she told me the young ladies had made her promise to act as a waiting-woman or something of that kind in the affair next night. "Then I'm blowed if I don't get leave to stop and see it," says I, and, oh, she did laugh so merrily, just like her old dear self. "I wish you may, Jem," she said, "for then I should be sure of having one old friend at hand, and I shouldn't seem so much afraid of all the fine folks." Next day we had a little more talk. "It's a strange world to live in here," said she. "Everything seems so peaceful and beautiful—folks all seem so kind and gentle, you know. Then they play music, and sing—oh, the young ladies do sing like angels. I've sat and listened to them till the tears were in my eyes, and

I thought I were in heaven. Eh, Jem, what a fine thing it would be if we could all live like this, and get out of the quarrelling and dirt and—" "And hard work," said I. "Well, I don't mind work," she answered me slowly, "but it's having nothing *but* work, work, work, from morning to night, all the year round. And no music, no—" I don't know what she was going to say, but I guessed. She hadn't asked after Davie; and yet I felt, or thought I knew that she longed to, but was too proud. So before I left her I just said a word or two about him pleasantly, partly, I own, to see if she still seemed to care about him, after he had left her so coolly. And when she flushed up and stopped sewing a minute I knew what more she wanted in her life, poor thing, to make it beautiful or even bearable.

The theatre was all finished, and I had a five shilling tip squeezed into my hand by the young master for putting on the steam and working early and late to get the job done in time, and I asked leave to

stay, and found that was just what they wanted, for fear anything should go wrong, and they'd make up a bed, though they'd got a scene-shifter from London. At last the lights were all lit and the company were gliding and strutting just like swans and peacocks into their places, when who should I see among the actors behind the scenes, dressed up so beautifully I hardly knew him, but young Mr. Fletcher, talking to one of the lady actresses who was the most beautiful creature I think I ever saw. I noticed how he looked at her and she at him, and I guessed it all in a moment, and I did hope for his sake she was going to be kind to him. He didn't remember me, and I kept out of the way.

Well, the play went on, and though I had been to some of the London theatres, I thought I never saw real acting till I saw Master Fletcher and his young lady a-courting and quarrelling. They did act beautifully—just like life. It was pretty plain that he, at all events, felt every word he said. But there was a mighty fine

young spark there (from Oxford, they said), who had to make love on the sly to our Maggie, and he seemed a deal too much in earnest also, and she seemed to like it so well and blushed so through her paint that *I* didn't half like it. But if I weren't pleased with this young chap when before the scenes, I liked it a deal less when I came on them once behind the scenes, and he was making love to her in real earnest, and she half laughing, half crying, told him to be quiet in a way that would have made any man more forward than ever.

But it all came to an end. The fine-feathered folk went off to a grand supper, the music stopped, and the lights went out, and I think Maggie, as well as myself, felt rather glum as we went down to our supper in the servant's hall. At least, she was very quiet, and seemed uncommonly shy of me. The next morning I was going off before breakfast through the shrubbery, with my tools at my back, when I heard my young gentleman (he from

Oxford) saying on the other side of the hedge "Now don't be so cruel, you little beauty. Can't you make-believe a little bit longer?" And then I heard that playful little laugh, which I should have known at the North Pole, and I heard Maggie Thatcher saying "Don't talk nonsense, Mr. Haughton. You don't care a bit about me, and you'll have forgotten all about me when you're twenty miles away." Then he makes all sorts of vows, and then there was some more fooling, and I felt as sick and queer as if I'd taken poison. I didn't know what to do, till I thought of rattling my tools as if somebody was going to work close by, and then they cleared out pretty quick. But I couldn't leave now till I had seen Margaret, and I made up my mind to lose a quarter or even half a day rather than miss her.

I had to wait two or three hours, though, before I could see her alone: and when I did, she seemed quite froze up like. So I felt pretty awkward, too, but when I began saying "Margaret," she took me up

short. "Margaret, indeed! We *are* getting stuck up." "Well then, Maggie," says I, "I want to make bold to give you a word of caution." She began to look rather black and dangerous, but I cared a deal more for her than myself, so I went on, "It isn't quite the thing, you know, for an honest girl like you to let that young spark be making love to you." Then she flashed out like lightning, "Who are *you* a speaking to, I should like to know?" But I kept my head down and pushed on, "No, it isn't, nor the more so when there's a brave, honest lad loving you madly, though you don't trouble about it: but he's worth more than a dozen of these young Tom-fools in purple and fine linen; and I know you loved him, too—once." "Pooh!" she cried, with a fine, haughty toss of her head, and her brown eyes flashing, "I haven't much cause to trouble myself about Davie Roberts, I should think, after the way he's gone off—you know all about that, I suppose; and I wonder you should come

preaching to me, when I'm only taking a little comfort to cure heart-sore." She spoke bitterly enough, but I could see her lip was quivering.

"If he has gone off," said I, "it's not for want of love for you." "I don't believe it!" she cried, trembling; and then she broke away, and didn't even say good-bye; but she was near crying, poor thing, and I daresay did cry like a good 'un, when she got away. If I could only—if I could but have taken her to my heart and given her some comfort! Poor Maggie!

CHAPTER VII.

I WENT straight home after work that day, and wrote to Roberts the same night. "Davie, my boy—come back and go down to Broadfield as fast as you can, if it's only for an hour, or you'll lose your lass to a dead certainty, and maybe if you don't, she'll get into sad trouble. Come back, old boy, or never show your face to her or me again." Then I gave him in a few awkward words some notion of what I had witnessed, and my opinion of the young spark who was making love to our poor girl.

Now all that follows about Maggie is more written by my friend the editor than myself. I have it all in my mind clear enough to this day, for every word she said

about it afterwards went straight to my heart, and I told him all about it, just to make my story complete. But I couldn't write it down to save my life; and I didn't think he'd make much of it—but he has, and I will say he's got it all out just as I could have wished; and though it made me feel queer at first to read it, I'm glad now he's done it. But he had a deal of talk with Maggie herself, and Davie too, in later times.

Margaret had to stay on at the fine house all that day, but saw nothing more of Mr. Haughton, the Oxford young gentleman, till the evening, when it being too dark to see any longer to work, one of the maid-servants proposed that they should get a little fresh air, and she went with her to one of the garden doors, and peeped in. It was a lovely sight, and they couldn't help creeping in, for the family and their guests had all gone out after dinner for an evening drive and ride. The girl soon disappeared, but Margaret strolled on, half fearfully, among the beautiful flower-beds—

up one green walk and down another, till she came to a grass plot surrounded with old trees and shrubs, and at one corner was an arbour covered with honeysuckles. The birds were singing their last songs, and everything seemed full of peace and happiness. "Ah," thought she, "if this could only last, and those I love, mother and all, could only be with me!" Just then she heard a soft musical voice behind her, which she knew too well, and which sent the blood to her face, and made her heart beat fast.

"Ah, my pretty Miss Maggie, I hoped I might get a chance of meeting you again; so you see I wouldn't go for a ride with the rest."

"Oh, Mr. Haughton, I thought you were all away from here," and she turned to go back to the house. But he caught her hand, and spoke so kindly, she said, and his tone and manner were so different from anything she had ever met with in the men she had hitherto known—there was something so beautifully sweet and gallant and refined about him, as she thought—that,

after a slight struggle in her mind, she gave it up, and let him lead her away to the harbour.

“Will you love me a little bit, Maggie?” said he, as he tried to take a kiss. But even amid the intoxicating sweetness of his lover-like flatteries and caresses, Margaret afterwards confessed the strange repulsiveness she speedily felt towards this sleek and impassioned young gentleman-wooer when the contrast flashed upon her—between his bold familiarities and the respectful gentle tenderness of her early workman-lover. She did not for a moment suspect the baseness of thought and feeling that lay hidden in the breast of the refined and cultivated Oxford suitor. She was too young and innocent for suspicions of that character. But her own true refinement and womanly instinct told her something of the infinite gulf that lay between the characters and purposes of the two men who, in the common phrase, had been “making love” to her. And it was the intensely vivid consciousness of this contrast that saved

Margaret Thatcher from weakly yielding her heart to Mr. Haughton's crafty flatteries and blandishments. It gave her time, in fact, to reflect, and awakened that spirit of resistance whereof there was enough, and to spare, in the poor girl's nature; and which now, as at many other times in her past sad life, was enlisted against the power of evil, though she scarcely even guessed that in this case it was so.

Mr. Haughton seemed to feel instinctively the change that was coming over the bewitching maiden by his side, and with the prudent tactics past experience in evil had taught him, he forbore to play the ardent lover any more. But when Margaret rose from the seat, as she speedily did when once her feeling of antagonism was roused, and as her lover walked demurely beside her, he began to talk of various objects around them in a style that was inexpressibly interesting to her. All the joy she had felt on being temporarily lifted into a higher and brighter realm of being, when she was being wooed in the play, and when she listened to the

young ladies singing, and looked on the splendid acting, and on the fair company assembled to witness it, now came swelling into her heart again as she listened to this accomplished and sprightly young Adonis. What might he not hope, what might she not fear, if opportunities of frequent meeting were but granted ?

Was there no protecting Providence—protecting the lover even more, perchance, than the innocent girl—in the circumstance that Edward Fletcher that night turned into the garden of the old Hall, when he came home from his ride, to smoke his cigar and ruminate beneath the stars on the prospects of immortal fame before him (if he should enter Parliament), and on the bright eyes of his beautiful mistress, instead of accompanying his friends to the tea-table ? However that may be, it did so happen that he encountered his friend and the young dressmaker (whom he recognized at once as the waiting-maid of the amateur performance) in one of the pleasant rose-embowered walks. A mutual and awkward

halt took place, and a momentary silence of surprise and the most provoking embarrassment. Mr. Haughton began accounting for his absence from the riding party, Fletcher commenced inquiring into it, and Margaret slipped away from her lover, all at the same time. And then began a conversation between the young men, of which human history containeth no record, and two results of which alone manifested the probable tenor—one was that Mr. Haughton, amid mingled inward laughter and wrath on his own part, and amid vehement remonstrances and laments by all the company, especially the ladies, took his departure next day for Oxford, which he declared, no doubt truly, he ought to have done the very next day after the theatricals; and the other was a letter which, years after, when the writer was dead, the receiver showed to James Woodford, carpenter and Chartist. It may as well be given here to complete this strange sad little chapter in a poor girl's life.

“Dear Fletcher,—Don't think you drove

me away from Fountain Hall. It would have taken a stronger man than you to do that. Fact is, I knew I should catch it from my venerable 'Dean' if I didn't cut and run for the 'Varsity; and my governor might hear of it, and I am not in much favour with him already. Neither can I say exactly that you had spoilt my sport, though *persevering* malice might have had that ill-omened and vindictive triumph. The truth is, the little witch has something of the devil in her—a little too much, perhaps; and I am always glad when Fate or envious friends arrest me in the course of wickedness which I grant I am too prone to follow. Believe me, Ned, I do not delight in sinful ways, and often resolve to leave them utterly. But when Opportunity (you know what Goethe as well as Shakespeare said of it) tempts me so strongly, what can I do but yield? I am no saint—not even half a one, like you; and, unlike you, I have never succeeded in protecting myself from evil by falling in love with a charming girl of my own order of beings.

But in the present case I don't think I had much chance. By all the gods, the lightning flash with which imperial Jove blasted poor Semele was nothing to the scathing bolt wherewith my brown-eyed witch would have annihilated your poor friend had she, in the course of courtship, once discovered marriage was not in my line at all—at least with such as she. The dear little thing in her innocence, I am certain, thought I was wooing her all in honest love, like any of her bucolic or workman lovers. And, to tell you the truth, Ned, I really believe I was—only I know it would not have ended so; and she is a kind of girl I could not bear to drag down into the gay and easy life of *filles de joie*. I fear you'll say you wish I had always been so scrupulous; but, my dear fellow, you don't understand. There are lots of girls among the lower orders who have never been really pure; their surroundings from the first, I suppose, have been bad—they are brought up to it. Nobody in particular is to blame—it's the fault of circumstances or Pro-

vidence, and is all meant, no doubt, in the present state of things, for the general good."

But I don't like quoting any more of this vile stuff, and only give that because it points truly to the real sources of much of the disgusting evils with which society is afflicted. They must be grappled with in the early lives and homes of the poor. Till these are purified, the supply of vicious elements and temptations to the middle and upper classes will never be arrested. But what do the "lower orders,"—the sturdy, honest, self-respecting operatives of the country—think of the matter? How long are they going to let the richer and better-educated men among us look to *their* class for victims? If victims are needful (and a great many gentleman and officers declare they are—for the army especially), cannot the working men suggest that those officers and gentlemen had better find them in their own rank! and hint that *their* sisters' and daughters' honour is quite as dear to them as that of the women of a

higher class may be to the families socially above them ?

Mr. Haughton was right. And during the long wakeful hours of the night following that quasi-paradise-arbour meeting, Margaret Thatcher thought more of Davie Roberts, far away, than of "the glittering gentleman ;" and felt conclusively she would rather be Davie's wife amid all the humble, or even squalid surroundings which their lot might entail upon them, if ever they came together, than be Mr. Haughton's bride walking "in silk attire," surrounded by all the beauty, refinement, and grace which education and wealth could give. Davie's true heart and tender, respectful love, which had been hers from childhood, were more to her than all the young Oxonian could offer her, even if he meant one half of what he said.

But *had* she still poor Davie's heart and faithful love ? Had she not driven him from her by her rude, ill-tempered treatment when last they met ? Ah, there was misery enough for her in that thought.

But Davie was more than to blame than she had been ; though in this lonely, trying hour, she was sore troubled with the thought of her sins, poor child. And no doubt she had some reason to be, though others had also much to answer for.

The young ladies kept her at work all the next day, and she listened to their sweet singing, and peeped out at the lovely garden smiling in the summer sunshine as she passed open windows ; and thought that heaven, if there was one, must be something like the scenes around her there, with just one true heart beating with hers, one " true love " by her side, whoever he might be. So in the evening twilight, when the great folks were all at dinner, and she knew that Mr. Haughton had returned to Oxford, she stole out once more to the sequestered grass-plot amid the old oak-trees, and sat down again in the arbour, and thought.

Had Mr. Haughton then appeared at her side, with his soft voice and winning ways, it would not have been fatal, perhaps, ultimately, to Davie's hopes, but Maggie's

peace of mind and his would probably have gone for many a day.

Maggie Thatcher returned home the day after that in which she was wandering out in the twilight amidst the roses and rhododendrons and grand old oaks of Fountain Hall. The young ladies were very kind to her at parting, as they had been throughout, and insisted on her accepting several pretty presents, besides a large and lovely nosegay of their choicest flowers. With all her pride she could not keep the tears from her eyes as she took leave of them, and the ladies wondered. Then an angry flush covered her face, and she hurried away, for she thought she heard one of them asking the other, "What on earth the girl could have to cry about, when they had all been so kind to her? Those sort of people surely can't be so very sentimental."

However that may be, young Maggie Thatcher went back to her dull, squalid home very heavy-hearted. The beautiful flowers seemed mocking her all the journey, and she was more than once on the point of

angrily and sadly throwing them away. But there was a rush of joy in hugging the little ones, and in being once more folded in her ailing mother's bosom, and in kissing, over and over again, the dear pale face—that face which, in spite of the poor soul's frettings and sickness, and heart-breaking troubles, had seldom been turned on her but with love. Then the return of her father, surly and complaining, threw its dark shadow over all, and the flowers were hurried out of sight, and Margaret confessed she went to her little bedroom thoroughly wretched, without a ray of hope or peace, and utterly ignorant of where to look for them.

The next day about noon, a handsome, well-dressed young man rode up to the "Three Blackbirds," in Broadfield, and having given his horse to the ostler, and called for a glass of ale, he proceeded to inquire of mine host if there wasn't a labouring man of the name of Thatcher living somewhere in the village, as he had a little windfall to leave with him. Mine

host snuffed his coming prey with joy, and doubtless wondered mentally, as he pointed out where Thatcher's cottage lay, how long it would be before the said wind-fall found its way into his till. "They'll be at dinner now, sir," he observed, "and you'll just catch him, maybe, if you go at once." But the young gentleman seemed to prefer letting the head of the family go to his work before calling to discharge his mission.

When at length he approached the cottage, Margaret knew him, of course, only too well, and turned red and then very pale. But by the time he had entered under the low roof and stood on the brick floor, she had recovered her usual spirits, had called up all the defiant resisting elements of her nature, and offered him a chair without a word of welcome. The mother looked inquisitively and rather anxiously first at one, and then at the other. Mr. Haughton himself was a little disconcerted at his reception, but soon proceeded to explain that a friend of his, a lawyer, had discovered

that there was a small sum due to a certain William Thatcher, of Broadfield, in winding up the accounts of some Friendly Society, and as he was to pass through the village on his way to London, he undertook to leave it, for he guessed the man must be the father of the young woman "whose acquaintance he had had so much pleasure in making on the theatrical boards at Fountain Hall, &c., &c." A young lady there, he said (but he ought to have said the young lady's maid), had given him her name and address, and there was the money, 1*l.* 18*s.* 9*d.*, which, however, he must hand to the father and get his receipt.

"For God's sake, sir," cried Margaret, when she understood the matter, "don't do that. You don't know what mischief you'll be doing us if you give that money to father. Give it to mother, or take it away as fast as you can, before father sees or hears of it!"

The fine young gentleman looked at her with amazement—could not understand

the case ; but made the mystery a pretext for getting her to step out with him into the adjoining lane.

“Maggie,” said he, taking her hand with all the warmth of an ardent, but respectful lover — for he had learned caution, and really felt a sincere respect, as well as admiration, for the rustic beauty — “Maggie, I meant to have kept away from you for a long time to come, till I could offer you a home . . . but . . . but, indeed, I cannot live without you. You are dearer to me than any woman ever has been or can be. . . . But I know you will not be left without plenty of other wooers. That money I brought your father is only a pretence I made for calling on you—to prevent suspicion. . . . No, don’t, *pray* don’t turn away. I can’t tell you how I love you. . . . Promise me you’ll wait a little while for me, and then that you’ll come to share my lot. . . . I know that you can’t leave your mother, but we’ll manage all that. I can’t bear you and she should have to live on with

that drunken sot. . . . Dear Maggie, promise me."

If the poor girl hesitated, who can blame her? She longed with all the strength of her wild, ardent nature, to rise out of the dreary surroundings of her present life into that higher and lovely existence of which she had lately had such exquisite glimpses. Above all she longed to lift her mother out of her father's reach, and now it would seem as if everything, save one, that she most desired were being offered her. But that one was Davie Roberts' love, and perhaps it would never be hers again. To love and to be loved were imperious necessities of her nature. Should she throw away the passionate love now offered her, and the prospect of release for her suffering mother, merely for the chance of one day winning back a lover who had contemptuously, cruelly thrown her off? And how hard it is for a young girl to resist the pleading of any lover—most of all such a one as that now pressing her hand and gazing with such lover-like earnestness into her eyes!

And as to Mr. Haughton. Do not think him an unmitigated villain. He was desperately in love, no doubt, as the words are usually understood, and was *just so far prepared* to sacrifice himself, his prospects, and position, by marrying this labourer's daughter, if he could not win her on any other terms, as to justify him to himself in making her believe he desired and intended to marry her if she consented.

But it was the girl's unselfishness that would save her if anything would. When she asked her suitor, with all the sweet, unsuspecting trust and dawning love that began to fill her heart, what he would be able to do for her mother if she believed all his beautiful words and promises, the quick instinct of affection felt grievously disappointed by the evasive reply. Something seemed to make it plain that the man was simply playing on her love for her mother to win her consent. Hard treatment had made her suspicious. And then while this fear was chilling her, the image of Davie Roberts, with his look of mingled

anguish and indignation, as he broke away from her when they last parted, rose up before her, and all the happy scenes of their early love and later "courting," came crowding up, till she felt in her inmost heart that if she promised herself to the man now holding her hand in his delicate jewelled grasp, Davie would never be the good and happy man she had delighted to fancy him. He had told her many a time if she were not to become his wife he would fling himself recklessly, miserably away. And what if he *had* left her in anger, could she not humble herself to ask his pardon, and so bring him back? Could she not risk even a more bitter degradation—risk his not accepting her repentance, and turning his back on her for ever? Why should she not think more of his happiness, his welfare in every way, than of her own selfish desire to be a fine lady, and to please this gay young grandee? Ah, why not?

So in the strength of these dark suspicions of one lover, and pure unselfish thoughts for another, with a great effort

she conquered the terrible temptation, dragged her hand from the tempter's grasp, faced him with a sad but resolute "No," and, as she turned to go, added, in a way he had never seen before, but which he could not misunderstand, "I thank you, sir, for what perhaps you mean as kindness, but look you," and her brow darkened, "never come near me again. You had better not; I mean it." Then she walked quietly down the lane.

Mr. Haughton knew his chance was gone, for that time at all events, and decidedly very unhappy, as well as very wroth, he wended his way thoughtfully back to the "Three Blackbirds." It was certainly a little consolation to reflect that Maggie had thrust back the 1*l*. 18*s*. 9*d*. upon him, since his trick had failed. But then, as the Yankees say, he felt himself "whipped" by a woman, and doubtless he didn't like that.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE was to be a great Chartist meeting at Bath the night after the amateur theatricals at Fountain Hall. Feargus O'Connor himself, besides other leading orators, especially Henry Vincent, if I remember right, were to address the Radicals of that renowned city, and the excitement was intense.

Birmingham, true to its character and creed, had been taking an important step. The famous "Political Union," which did so much throughout the country to help pass the Reform Bill, had recently proposed a "General Convention of the Industrial Classes," a "National Rent Fund," a "Sacred Month" (i. e. a general holiday and abstinence from all work), a plan for

"Simultaneous meetings" all over the kingdom, and a "National Petition. The last-named measure was a very able, pithy document, containing all the points of the "People's Charter," except "Equal Electoral Districts." The idea of all the working classes abstaining from every kind of work for a month, in order to show the middle and upper classes their dependence for the comforts, and even necessities of life, on the men whom they were treating as aliens and serfs, was a very favourite and most plausible idea with us poor hand-workers from the day it was proposed till the memorable time when some of us tried to put it in execution. We never stopped to ask how we ourselves were to get fed and pay our rent if nobody did a stroke of work for a month. "Look here, Jem," said Mr. Fletcher to me years after, when he was enlightening me on that and one or two other subjects, "Your project puts me in mind of this fellow," and he showed me a print of an election row, and of a chap seated up in the corner of the picture on

the bar of the sign-board of an inn, and sawing away at it as hard as he could swing, forgetting that as soon as he had cut half way through he would have a mighty tumble and a broken head, for he was cutting away the very bar he sat upon. "There, my friend," said Mr. Fletcher, "you'll be cutting away your own support by your sacred month, as well as that of the bloated aristocracy!" Eh, dear! what a rum world it is, my mates.

But the "Convention" was the first thing to be done; and a grand affair it was. Fifty-three delegates were sent up to London—those from Newcastle were appointed by a meeting composed of 70,000 persons, from Glasgow by 150,000, from Birmingham by 200,000, and from Manchester by 300,000; other towns in proportion. Among them were three magistrates, six newspaper editors, one Church of England clergyman, one Dissenting Minister, and two doctors of medicine. Workmen, with a few shopkeepers, &c., made up the great body of the Convention. Their first

meeting was held at the place where I had the good luck to go under Kelso's wing two years before—I mean the British Coffee-house, Cockspur Street ; afterwards they met at a hall in Dr. Johnson's famous quarters, viz., Bolt Court, Fleet Street. I had got appointed by the small society I belonged to in Kirby Street, Hatton Garden, and felt uncommonly jolly when Lovett was proposed as secretary. I was rather too shy to open my lips to *speak* for many days, but I shouted heartily enough for his appointment. Some of the physical force party didn't at all like this move ; and Feargus was pretty mad to find it had been made before he came to the Convention. But Lovett's election had been carried triumphantly, and he couldn't upset it. One of the first steps taken after this was to push on measures for getting the great petition to Parliament for the charter extensively signed, and with this view it was resolved to send out missionaries to various districts for enlightening the nation on the subject of the charter and getting signa-

tures. Davie Roberts was one of those appointed, and had to address meetings in Somerset and Gloucestershire. Restless and miserable about Maggie, and full of burning desire to get the charter at once made law of the land, he had jumped at an offer of this appointment.

The night when the great meeting above mentioned was to be held in Bath, Davie was in the committee-room of the Chartist Association in that town, waiting to go with the rest of the speakers on to the platform. He told me afterwards he had been much struck with the look of a sallow-faced, dark-haired, very young man, who was one of the four principal leaders of the movement in Bath and the neighbourhood. On making some inquiries about him, Davie learnt that he had not long before, in the most gallant fashion, swung himself up in front of the meeting at a great open-air gathering held in Wiltshire by the country gentry and farmers to oppose the Repeal of the Corn Laws; and through the unexpected and generous help of Earl Ducie

(a staunch supporter of repeal) he was allowed a chance of addressing the vast assembly, and firing a shot for the charter, for the crowd took up the cry of "Fair play!"—the swells were overawed for the moment, and so for once in his and their lives the young Chartist agitator got a comparatively quiet hearing at a great county meeting in the South of England on the subject of the Charter as a remedy for the people's wrongs. Our fellows got it more their own way in the North, but it was the talk of the country that such a thing could happen in the South. I remember the *Wiltshire Independent* came out bravely about it. So all this, of course, made the young man a hero in Davie's and many other eyes, and he edged up as near him as he could. Then somebody told him this audacious youth often took opportunities of urging his working-men hearers to improve their minds as well as struggle for their rights, and that he sometimes even held religious services after their meetings, or on a Sunday evening in the

villages, where the Chartists provided him with a room. Davie, who was getting more and more interested in the young man, asked whether the Bath Committee, to which he belonged, were also in favour of these lectures and discussions ; but just then he noticed the youth in question was speaking to the great agitator himself. It was a curious contrast. The slim, pale youth, with his burning eyes and eager expression, taking what he thought was a fine opportunity for interesting the tall, burly, red-haired " Master of Legions " (as somebody, I think, called him) in the plans they had been adopting in Bath (and which they wanted to see adopted throughout England) for qualifying the people to use wisely the franchise when they got it. So he spoke rapidly and clearly, and Feargus listened rather impatiently, but he did listen, for he saw many others were listening too. The dark-haired young man soon finished by saying, " And so you see, Mr. O'Connor, we are doing our best to educate the people."

“D——n their education ! Stick to the Charter,” was the loud, contemptuous comment of the imperious demagogue, as he turned his back on the speaker. And for a moment silence fell on the whole room. The young man and the Bath leaders generally were so taken aback and disgusted, that they could not utter a word. Soon a few of the pot-house sort took heart, and applauded their leader’s sentiments. But Davie said the whole party moved on to the platform completely upset ; and as for himself, with all his faith in physical force, and his anger at what he called Lovett’s mealy-mouthed, milk-and-water doctrines, he never had any real faith in O’Connor himself after that night, great as had been his admiration for him till they met. So, of course, he was before very long in the black list of the *Northern Star*. He knew well, no man better, that we *must* educate the people if the Charter were to do ’em any good ; and he ever afterwards looked on Feargus as siding more or less with the devil in the great fight. The pale young man,

of course, quite agreed with him in this opinion. O'Connor formed an equally contemptuous view alike of him and of the Bath leading Chartists generally, and thenceforth they were all marked men. The editor of the *Northern Star* gave them very little chance from that time of doing much for the Charter. They were to be "squelched"—and were sneered down, or insinuations thrown out against them accordingly.

Both Roberts and I often wished we had seen and heard more of the young Educator, but after a time he seemed to sink out of sight, like so many of those whom O'Connor drove from the movement. It ought, however, to be remembered here, to Bronterre O'Brien's lasting honour, that he always stood out manfully for educating the people, so much so, that the O'Connorites nicknamed him the "Schoolmaster." Would that he had been better ballasted: no man could then have checkmated O'Connor better than he.

Looking back at Davie's account of that meeting, and of many others, and at what

I have myself grown to, I can't help wondering at the comparative indifference of English working-men to politics now. Just think of the enormous masses of men who attended meetings to send up delegates to that Convention, as well as at the crowded and enthusiastic meetings, not merely in the great towns of the North, but in the small, sleepy towns, and even agricultural villages of the South, whenever it was announced that a Chartist lecturer was going to speak. Do English working-men at the present day think that politics don't affect them, I wonder? or do they believe that the middle and upper classes will take good care of their interests, and see that our rulers don't take too much upon themselves? If they do, perhaps they are right, but I rather fancy they are wrong.

The following night Davie had to address a meeting, single handed, at Stroud. The busy clothworkers in that industrious valley were waking up. It was expected and proved to be a crowded meeting. Two or three leading Chartists of the district were

to take part in the proceedings, but not till after Davie's address. Davie had got a warm, dashing style of eloquence, which he had first learned on Temperance platforms, as he had thrown himself into that movement heart and soul a twelvemonth or more ago. It was just like him to take up a work of that kind, for all the chaffing and rude practical jokes he had to go through on account of it among his companions only made him more zealous for it. But it wasn't only chaff and mischievous tricks and a lot of sneering he'd got to put up with. Those were days when the roughs and rowdies used to come, well primed, to Temperance meetings, and send things harder and nastier than bad words at the speakers' heads. But Davie never flinched till he went on the Chartist stump, and then, when he was knocking about the country with never a Temperance coffee-house to be seen (they hadn't come up then), and only the public-houses to go to, he had to give in at last. But he had learned how to speak, and with his really


deep, strong feelings as to the wrongs of the working classes, he had soon become a great favourite wherever he went. O'Connor had not "bonnetted" him then. His fame had been trumpeted up and down these beautiful Gloucestershire valleys, and the clothworking Chartists from far and near had come tramping up the valley or down the hills to Stroud, through sludge and darkness, to hear the orator and show their zeal in the cause. But the poor fellow's heart was heavy as lead, even in the midst of his triumphs.

Davie was sitting in the tap-room of the public-house which had been assigned for his headquarters as a mark of honour. Lesser stars were generally accommodated with half a bed or a shake-down composed of a hearth-rug and great-coats in the humble dwellings of sympathizing and self-sacrificing friends. Two or three of the leading members of the Chartist local committee had just come to bring him to the meeting, when another came to the door and said, "Please, here's a letter for Muster

Roberts." It had been sent first to one person and then to another, and so had been delayed. Davie, seeing my handwriting, asked for a few minutes to read it. In about a quarter of an hour's time, just when the chairman, Davie, and the committee ought to have been going on the platform, there was a fine stir among these gentlemen, and the impatient audience soon saw something had gone wrong. They shuffled and knocked with their sticks, and a few of the more audacious actually cried "Time's up," for they had a long way to walk after the meeting was over. The committee were at their wit's end. For poor Davie was not to the "fore."

"Mr. Roberts," said one of the elders, after time enough had been given for reading the letter at least twice over, "we must be going." "Mr. Roberts," said another presently, "we really must be off. What's the matter?" But, to the consternation of all present, instead of getting up and accompanying them, Roberts only answered in a husky voice, "Gentlemen, you must

do this job without me to-night. I must go back to town by the night coach"—and seeing their horror and rising wrath, he went on, "You've got lots of first-rate speakers here, I know," and then as the men broke out in all sorts of wild and fierce remonstrances, he struck his hand on the table with a great oath, and swore he couldn't and wouldn't speak—no, not if all the devils in hell howled at him. "There were worse devils on earth, and he must be at the throat of one of them before another night came." The poor fellows looked at one another aghast. They thought (only too naturally in those days) that the missionary had been partaking rather too freely of the "good creature" supplied by his host. But Davie had only had three or four glasses. He couldn't take less, sitting there three or four hours. And a veteran among them read the riddle more truly. He whispered to his mates to go and set the ball a rolling—to say that Mr. Roberts was very unwell, but he hoped soon to come and address them; that in the



meantime, &c., &c. Then, all the rest being gone, he sat down kindly by the side of Davie, who he could see was struggling with some great inward trouble, asked leave to look at my letter, talked about the great opportunity he would have by going to the meeting of exposing the wickedness of the upper classes, told him the Stroud night coach was gone and the mail was certain to be full : but promised to borrow a cart and drive him four miles after the meeting across the country to catch another night coach, if he would stay and do his best for them at the meeting. After a minute or two Davie rose, and dashing his hand across his eyes, exclaimed, " By G—, brother, you are right ; I'll go and give them my mind." So go he did, and spoke in a way that electrified the Stroud Valley clothworkers, and sent them home with a determination to get the Charter and to grind the aristocracy to powder, which went tingling to their finger tips, and made them each long to be marching on London with a pike on one shoulder and a musket

on the other. But Davie had learnt caution from Rufford's fate, and in the very tempest of his fiery eloquence, he didn't utter a word the Government spies could lay hold of. Lucky for him. There were more than one present, besides constables.

The following day, Saturday, Rufford was to come out of prison, and a number of us were going to have a grand supper to welcome him, so you may be sure I had plenty to do; all the more because my foreman couldn't spare me till the dinner hour. I wasn't much in heart for merry-making, for besides that business about Maggie Thatcher, Rufford looked so ill and worn, that it went to one's heart to see him. He didn't look like a triumphant martyr at all, nor did most of our fellows when they came out of prison; and I've noticed how nearly all of those who were imprisoned never took such an active part afterwards in the movement. This came, I take it, of their going on the false tack at first of trusting to violent talk and physical force to get the Charter, instead

of reason, argument, and appeals to men's consciences or sympathies. But when the conduct of the Anti-Corn-Law agitators is contrasted in this matter with the Chartists, greatly to the disadvantage of the latter, it ought to be remembered that Cobden, Bright, and Co. had 100,000*l.* to spend in printing and public meetings, while our men often had the greatest difficulty in raising 100*l.*, and many a time they could get nothing at all unless by some of those firebrand speeches. But as to imprisonment, when our great chief, Lovett, had to bear it, the effects were very different.

Well, I was going back to work that Saturday morning after breakfast, when I saw Davie Roberts walking as fast towards me as if he were in for a wager. "Thank goodness!" cried I; "I'm glad you're come. But I don't know—maybe you'll say it's a storm in a tea-cup, after all."

"Jem," said he, under his breath and in a strange tone, "don't play the fool with me. You see I've come—almost the moment I got your letter. But"—then

his voice sank a bit, and he couldn't go on at first—"but, Jem, old friend, what's the good of my going down to Broadfield? If you'll tell me where that double-d——d young scoundrel is to be found, I'll go and have it out with him, and make sure of his doing her no mischief. But I'll not see her. I tell you that girl don't care a —— rap for me—never will. I know it as sure as we are standing here." Then, as he saw I differed from him, he went on almost in a fury, "She don't care, Jem—she wouldn't mind if I were dead! She as good as told me so when—when I saw her last. What should I go whining to her for? I tell you she don't care a d——n for me, or else do you think she'd be taking up with a young jackanapes like that?"

Well, I *was* sorry to see him so put about; yet I couldn't honestly tell him I thought the girl did care for him, or else, as he said, how the deuce could she have been listening to that Oxford spark? Ah! what do men know about young girls' hearts?

"But it won't do," says I, "to leave the poor child to that tarnation young scoundrel, though he do wear kid gloves and a quizzing-glass;" and I couldn't help laughing, though it wasn't a pleasant laugh, I dare say. Davie's eyes glared like a wild cat's.

"Leave her to him; I should like to know who proposes that. . . . But *I can't* go to her. I daren't go. . . . Jem, you must, there's a good fellow. Good friend and true you always have been. You must run down as soon as shop's closed."

"Davie," said I, "there's many a thing I'd do for you as I wouldn't do for none besides. . . . But I can't do that. 'Once bit twice shy.' I told you how she answered me. Tell you what it is. I know enough of Maggie Thatcher to say that not a soul could be of any use to her now but somebody she loves, or has loved, as she once, I know, loved you."

What follows I leave my friend who supervises this to tell. I can't, and he knows all about it.

CHAPTER IX.

It seems that within two or three hours of Mr. Haughton's departure from the Thatchers' cottage, Davie stood at the door. Mrs. Thatcher feebly gave him the old kind welcome, but Maggie hardly answered his greeting. It was joy almost too great the first moment to see him there again. But then all her pride was up in arms—all the resentment at his leaving her, which she had been nursing for months—and so she stood there, cold, defiant outwardly—within, her heart beating as if it would burst its walls.

And Davie—he was distracted between the memory of his early love and the cruel way in which he thought she had treated him—between the love which the sight of

her had brought back in all its force, and the thought of the aristocratic lover, to whose vile pleadings she must have been listening. So they stood silent, fierce, and miserable.

It was an awkward moment, but Davie at last put an end to the torturing suspense for the moment, by taking up the girl's sun-bonnet, which lay on a chair, and handing it to her with one hand, while he tried to lead her to the door with the other. At first she wouldn't move, and Davie was on the point of throwing her hand from him and bolting away back to London. But somehow it seems just then he found she was coming. They went out together in the lane, and then, but very slowly and reluctantly, she went with him over a stile into a field. The setting sun, she remembered, was throwing long beautiful shadows from great trees on the rich grass, where the cattle were quietly feeding, while the air was full of the birds' even-song.

"If you want me so much to come with you now," she said at length, in a hard,

cold manner, "why did you go off as you did, and never write to me for months?" Davie's heart was in his mouth. Had she then been looking for a letter from him?

"I'd have written—ay, and come a dozen times over," said the half-penitent lover, "if I hadn't thought you'd done with me, Maggie, for good and all."

"Oh, I dare say. That's the way all you men talk when you play the fool with a girl, and make her fancy all sorts of things, and then worry her with your tempers, and then go off in a huff."

Davie was losing patience again. He was always very quick in his feelings, and though he couldn't easily be fierce with her, he didn't believe she had ever thought much about him, and he began to move away.

"Well, good-bye, then," he said. "You've had another lover with daintier hands than mine to comfort you. A high-born scoundrel, I believe. I know all about it. You needn't scowl on me, Maggie Thatcher. You know you've been taking up with that young lord, and—"

"Then that Jem Woodford," she broke in with, "has been telling you a pack of lies."

"Jem Woodford *never* told a lie!" cried Davie angrily, "and you know you've met t'other one."

It was a great moment for this poor labourer's daughter. If she hadn't thrown Mr. Haughton's treacherous love in his face, he would actually have been in that very field when Davie came.

"I sent Mr. Haughton away from yon lane," she answered quietly, "two hours ago; and I'm thinking he won't come back in a hurry. You needn't be jealous of that lad, Davie," she added, in a softer and sorrowful tone. "Think of your own doings by me."

"Whatever I did," said Davie, "I don't think you fretted much about it, Miss Thatcher, and I won't give you—" any more trouble, he was going to say, but as he turned half round to take one last look at the dear face of her whom he couldn't help loving better than ever now that he

seemed once again to be losing her for ever—he saw that face was being covered with the sun-burnt hands, and he heard a stifled sob—and all the truth rushed on him at once. He was at her side in an instant, and by an uncontrollable impulse he took her in his arms and laid the girl's head, with all its mass of flowing curly hair (the sun-bonnet seemed to have fallen off), softly against his rough jacket, while the tears ran down her face, and she offered no resistance to his comforting caresses.

“Oh, Maggie, Maggie. I thought you didn't care a bit about me.”

“I haven't known a happy hour,” said the poor child, as well as her tears would let her, “since we quarrelled.”

Here was a strange revelation. Maggie's pride and maiden coyness had quite misled her lover, and her temper had both enraged and wounded him more than once beyond endurance. But he couldn't help feeling he had himself sometimes been much to blame. So the reconciliation was complete, and it was a very sweet and blessed hour they

spent by the old stile that evening as the shadows lengthened and the sun went down, and a deep peace stole into their hearts.

At length Maggie began to think of "mother," who would be "badly wanting her tea." "Davie," quoth she, "we must be going," and suiting the action to the word, she prepared to spring lightly over the stile. But Davie caught her. "One word before we go. Tell me, my darling, just to make me always feel confident and presuming like—why do you care about such a fellow as me?"

"I know," answered the pretty maid, with her eyes, (said Davie afterwards,) as well as her lips, and with such a saucy smile.

"Tell me."

"Then don't squeeze my hand so tight. Why, you see, Davie, ever since I've known you, you've always lifted me, like, out of the dull, teazy round of things into what—what was like a new life to me. You talked so fine about working folks' troubles

and—their wrongs—” (“Go on, darling.”) —“And you did so want to help them, and once I heard you make a speech, ducky, and” (in a whisper) “it was such a beauty. I mean such rubbish. Be quiet. But I knew you meant well. I knew too, only too well, how much labouring men want some one to help ’em—and though father hasn’t been what he should have been, he knows right from wrong better than many, and he has said more than once you were one of a thousand—”

“Oh, it’s so nice listening to you. Do go on, Maggie.”

“But I think that’s all. Oh, no. You see, you write such beautiful poetry, and you read it so nicely. Well, yes—and then other folks praised you, Davie, and then the—girls talked about you—”

“Oh, you darling little witch! how pretty you are!”

“Nonsense, get along. But, Davie, one word. How came you to care such a lot about me?”

“Because *you* were one of a thousand—

always helping other folks—picking up some poor little brat out of the ditch, or giving up your supper, when you got any, to them as had none. And when that poor Kitty Barber's mother died, I shan't soon forget all you did for her; nor how you stood between your mother and one who, if he weren't your father . . .”

“Davie, dear, come along, we *must* be trotting.”

“One good kiss, Maggie, before we cut . . .”

And while the blushing girl adjusted her sun-bonnet, and her lover still kept one arm round her, she looked into his eyes with an expression he never could forget to his dying day, and said,—

“Oh, Davie, who that have loved like this could ever quarrel?”

“Hanging would be too good for 'em if they did,” responded Davie cheerfully, as they sprang over the stile and went quickly down the lane.

Poor things! They didn't know then that it takes a deal of loving—ay, and

loving of a very self-sacrificing kind, too, I think, as well of what is called discipline, before the ill that is in us seems to get burnt out of us. I suppose it's true what I heard a parson once say, that even Heaven would not be Heaven to those who aren't ready for it.

Somebody says, "Call no man happy till he's dead;" and I say, "Call no love perfect till you're parted."


It should be mentioned here that when Mr. Haughton was returning through the pleasant lanes of Broadfield, discomfited and humiliated, to the "Three Blackbirds," in search of his horse, he suddenly spied a straw hat with pink ribbons ahead of him, with a light, dainty, girlish figure under it tripping jauntily along. Quickening his pace, he overtook the damsel, and of course entered into cheerful conversation with her by way of consolation for his recent disappointment. Kitty Barber (the little "Puss-in-boots" of our earlier days) was equally, of course, quite ready for a little flirtation with a handsome young gentleman,

with such affable manners and beautiful riding-whip and spurs on his heels. The intimacy grew apace, and the bright Oxford gentleman did not reach the "Three Black-birds" as soon as he had expected; but when he did it was not in a proud or happy frame of mind. Kitty liked a little flirtation well enough, but was not at present disposed for a more serious attachment. Foolish girl. She had always loved Davie Roberts since they were schoolfellows, and was only too well aware that he and her handsome rival, Maggie Thatcher, had fallen out so thoroughly that she cherished desperate, not to say passionate expectations of seeing him, after all, a suitor for her own hand.

So after a due amount of playful compliment and rustic banter, Kitty wished the owner of the riding-whip and spurs good evening at the corner of a lane, and tripped off with a self-satisfied smile, leaving him to try the effect of a ride back to London and short whist at his club till the small hours, by way of soothing his troubled mind.

In the course of twenty-four hours it was known to the village of Broadfield generally, and to Kitty Barber in particular, that Davie Roberts had returned and made it up with his sweetheart, and then the disappointed maiden, in the anguish of her heart, wished for at least two hours that she could have mounted behind the gallant stranger on his beautiful horse, and ridden far away from Broadfield for ever. But Kitty Barber knew more than the innocent Maggie about the dangers of such companionship. Some of her associates had both enlightened and warned her.

So, after parting with Maggie, Davie went back to the West of England to finish his lecturing work, and everybody wondered what had come to him, for he was almost as full of wit and fun in his speeches as Henry Vincent himself, and more eloquent than ever; and though he didn't give 'em that savage, bitter style with which he had electrified the Stroud Valley Chartists, there wasn't a town or village where he spoke but heaps of men, and women too (Davie



was always a mighty favourite with the women) begged and prayed him to come again soon ; and many a place wanted to send him straight away from the meeting up to the Queen and her ministers to tell them what poor people were suffering, certain that she would do all he wanted.

But though Davie liked all this sort of thing as much as most men, and got his head turned a little, I'm afraid, by all the praise and flattering he got, there was a stronger magnet still drawing him back to London ; and he knew what we said was true, that, if he kept much longer away from the bench, he wouldn't be able to get a place in any good shop for a long time. So he came back as soon as his engagements were over, and we got him a berth with a very good firm ; but we had to clap an *alias* on him, for he would never have got work, then, under his own name. The first question most foremen would have asked, or, at all events, the first the master would have asked at pay-time, would have been whether he was "that d——d Chartist

fellow who went about trying to make folks discontented, and put them up to plundering, burning," &c., &c.

So Davie Roberts settled down again to humdrum work with hammer and chisel, compass, plane, and centre-bit, not altogether, it must be confessed, quite contentedly. When he was down at Broadfield it was all right enough, and many and many a happy Saturday evening and Sunday they two passed together. But in the shop and after work in his lodgings, or at the "public," he was often very glum. I could see he was fretting sometimes to be out again, and on the platform, amusing the honest, hard-handed serfs who welcomed our Chartist orators as if they were angels from heaven. And the way the Convention was going on, and the Parliament folk, too, on their side, was not likely to make a true Chartist easy at his work or anywhere else.

Still Davie now stuck to his trade very fairly. But trouble was in store, though the sky was pretty clear for a time. Kitty

Barber had lost both father and mother, and lived with an aunt, who, though a good woman in the main, didn't understand much about keeping young girls in order, and hadn't authority enough to manage her niece wisely, even if she had known how. So the poor motherless thing ran almost wild, and, but for Maggie Thatcher, would have had scarce any guidance or help in living a decent sort of life. She wasn't at all a bad sort of girl in herself, and for a time was very fond of Maggie, as she had reason to be. But she was vain and selfish, and very giddy. She never meant to sting her benefactress ; but when she saw that the lad whom above all others she liked best out of the whole school was " keeping company " with her friend, an evil spirit seemed to enter into her heart, and at times she hated that friend " like poison." But in general, I fancy, she was only thoughtless and selfish, just like most of us, and would say, when she had done a mean or cruel thing, " Oh, I didn't think," meaning she thought only

of herself. Unless we *do* think about something else beforehand, I've noticed it is generally too late when the temptation comes, for then we do just what we like, *without* thinking. But, for all this, Kitty was just the kind of girl to please a man, very pretty and very lovable, too, in her way. It was a silly, flighty, sort of way, but none the less attractive to many whom she could make fools of. It was an evil day when she began to say, and kept on saying, "Well, I don't see but what I've as good a right to win Davie Roberts' love as that sulky young vixen, Maggie Thatcher. I know he's many a time shown he's liked me a deal better than any one else."


Said Maggie Thatcher, however, troubled her head very little about Miss Kitty's jealousies, for the good reason that she knew nothing of them. She continued trying to do the wayward girl all the good in her power, though sometimes hurt and surprised at Kitty's behaviour. Davie Roberts' love was everything to her, and enabled her to bear cheerfully much more troubles at home

than any she met with outside. Her father went on just in the old way, except that he never lifted his hand against either his wife or children, while the poor woman's health got worse, and the younger children more "fractious," day by day, in spite of all that Maggie could do to mend matters. Davie's presence of an evening, however, was always a "cheer-up"—the mother ceased complaining, the children listened with delight to his queer stories, even the surly father came home earlier from the "Three Blackbirds," and in a better temper than usual, to listen also, and sometimes got quite pleased and interested in hearing about Davie's experiences in the West, and in discussing the grievances of the poor. So this was indeed a happy time for Maggie Thatcher compared with her previous life, and she blossomed out, both in face and mind, till Davie was more in love with her than ever.

Once he took her to spend a whole Saturday in the Cremorne Gardens, and a very happy day it was. There was music, and

flowers, and lots of happy-looking work-people, and climbing boys, and wonderful acrobats, and Davie all the time holding her hand. And then the mid-day meal in a pleasant little nook, and more music and exhibitions and games, and tea in an arbour, with the moon rising through the trees, and then fireworks, and then riding home in the summer night, a-top of an omnibus, with his arm round her to make sure against her falling off. "Oh, it's just heavenly!" sighed the happy girl with her head on his shoulder, more than once, before it was all over.

True, there were sights to be seen in the gardens before they left, anything but heavenly, and which make decent folks ask why must public places of amusement be thus disgraced? But Maggie and Davie were wrapped in their own pure and mutual love, and there was little room in their hearts for the entrance of evil thoughts. So the remembrance of that day was ever afterwards like a very beautiful dream, but more abiding and intensely real than



any dream. They both knew they had once at least, and for many hours, been full of deep and unmixed happiness, and they were the better able all their lives to believe in the blessedness that might yet be to come.

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT this time I was sent by our foreman to do a bit of a job at a fine house near Kensington Gore; and think how I was "struck all of a heap" by seeing my young gentleman again, Master Fletcher, lolling on a sofa in the drawing-room, when we went in with our shoes off to look at the curtain frame. He didn't know me, but I wanted badly to ask him if he didn't remember "Jem Woodford" (for I always felt drawn to him, like), and yet the foreman being there too, made me more backward in speaking; but when we came down in the dinner-hour, I told the groom (who was then in the servants' hall) how I used to know him, and asked all about him, for I wondered how he came there. So, says



Bill, the groom, "Oh, he's just on a visit here now, and a first-rate rider he is too," and when I asked him a little more, he answered, "Oh, he takes it easy, he do; he's always riding or walking in the parks or lolling on that 'ere sofy; and I hear as how he's a Government hartist and writes for the play, too, and flirts—oh, my! doesn't he flirt with the young missis!"

When we went up to the drawing-room, after their lunch, my young gentleman was gone, and I hadn't another chance of speaking to him. But I came across him again, I'm glad to say, or rather he came across me. Not many months after that I heard a voice I thought I knew, one evening—some one talking with our landlady about her first floor front; and going out into the passage (for, thinks I, if it be him I won't miss him again if I can help it), who should I see coming down the stairs with another gentleman but young Mr. Fletcher. I touches my cap to him, and says, "Good evening, Mr. Fletcher; you won't be remembering me, I dare say, but

it isn't so many a long day since we were down together by the Thames wharf ; nor, for the matter of that," says I, getting bolder, "since you drove me about with the wheelbarrow ;" and then he gave such a pleasant laugh, and said, "What, Jem Woodford, where have you been all this time?" So I just told him, and asked him if he was coming to lodge with our landlady, and he said no, he wasn't, but his friend was, for she had got a room at the back of the house which would just suit for a "studio" I think he called it. "You see, Jem, this gentleman is going in for painting. I don't mean house-painting, but pleasanter work than that, and what I hope will pay better." Think how I was taken aback when I found Mr. Fletcher's friend was Mr. Haughton, who had left Oxford. So he *did* come to lodge at our house, and fitted up the room over the stables at the back of his drawing-shop, and there he worked away like a dozen.

Mr. Fletcher told me he had been studying at Oxford since he used to be at the

wharf at Rotherhithe, having had some thoughts of being a parson, but had given it up. And then I soon told him why I didn't like the sight of Mr. Haughton, and he said slowly, half to himself, as it were, "Yes, I'm afraid he's no better than many others. But you see, Master Jem, that's just why I want him to work hard at his profession. He has plenty of good in him, my friend, depend upon it, whatever you Radical fellows may think of the broadcloth. For I suppose you *are* a dangerous Radical like the rest of your class?"

Well, I should have rather liked kicking Mr. Haughton down-stairs, nevertheless, the first time I met him on them, though I didn't know *all* the bad about him till later on. But I knew I had no business to make a row in my landlady's house, and I should only have been taken to the police-station—and all for what! Because he had chosen to make love to our Maggie. Well, I suppose he had a right to do that, as much as Davie or I. It's a great pity one

can't thrash a scoundrel, sometimes, *before* he's done mischief.

Of course I should never have gone near his room, hadn't Mr. Fletcher come to see him now and then, and asked me once or twice to come up and have a chat there. I always went then, for I dearly liked a talk with my old young master.

But one night, in particular, I remember, it wasn't so pleasant. It was when there had been a great meeting of Chartists, and all London was talking about it; and says Master Edward to me, "Why, Jem, what have those noisy blackguards been about to-day? You have nothing to do with them, I hope?" "What blackguards, sir," says I? "Why, those Chartist fellows;" and thereupon I fired up in a moment, and said quite blunt, "You don't know what you are talking about, sir, to call them blackguards; there are first-rate respectable men among 'em, and very honest men, too, that *you* might be proud to be acquainted with." He seemed taken a

little aback with this, and they both looked at me from head to foot.

Mr. Haughton laughed more than I liked, and said, "I say, Fletcher, we must take care of our pockets." Now working-men are generally pretty quick to take offence if they are chaffed by their betters, and I told Mr. Fletcher he didn't ought to have asked me up there to have me and my friends talked about in this way.

"Well, well," said he rather contemptuous-like, "I didn't know 'they were friends of yours, Woodford. We didn't wish to hurt your feelings, and I don't suppose you would join them in a burn-and-plunder party."

"Excuse me, Mr. Fletcher," said I, "but you've no right to talk of honest men in that way. They only want to get their rights."

"Don't you believe any such nonsense as that, Woodford," he answered me quite sharp.

"Why," cried Mr. Haughton, "don't you know, Fletcher, what the Chartists want is 'Universal Suffering and Animal Parliaments!'"

“You gentlemen have got the last,” said I rather sulkily, “for your genteel snobs in the House crow like cocks as well as bray like donkeys when they want to put down an honest man.” They laughed, but I didn’t mind, and stood up for my Chartist comrades, and was going to say something about William Lovett, but I could see Mr. Fletcher didn’t like it, and was so cool and shy of me, and the other young sprig was smiling so sneeringly, that I very soon wished them good-night, and walked out of the room rather in a huff. Well, they didn’t seem to care to have any more talk about Chartists after this, but we did talk about other things now and then, and after a bit I found Mr. Edward quite as pleasant and taking as ever. I don’t think he was much spoilt by all the gay life he seemed to be leading, for all he was working so hard, too, at his new business; and he used sometimes to give me a ticket for the theatre and for a picture-gallery or two. But still I don’t mean to say that he wasn’t rather on the high horse with me at times, and perhaps a trifle more after he found I

was an out-and-out Chartist; though I did make matters a little better in that quarter by telling both him and his friend there was a great difference between physical-force Chartists and moral-force Chartists, and by letting out a little against Feargus O'Connor. However, he finished up once by saying, "Well, Jem, I believe you are a thorough good fellow yourself, but as for the Chartists generally, I would not like to touch them with a pair of tongs; I only hope they'll all come to grief as soon as convenient, and I think the less we hear of 'em the better."

Another evening, I remember, when my young master had asked me if I'd like to come up and see his friend's painting, he began saying what a jolly life it was to be always at work in trying to produce such beautiful things as Mr. Haughton was painting and such as I had seen in some picture-gallery to which he had sent me the Saturday before, "but we won't talk about Chartism, Woodford," he said pleasantly. So says I, looking at the painting, which

seemed very beautiful, "It's a fine thing, sure, to be always engaged in work of this kind, and a deal pleasanter than to be always planing and sawing." Well, he and Mr. Haughton laughed quite pleasantly, and Mr. Fletcher said he wished a few more folks could have better work than that everlasting sawing and planing. "But I'm coming among you fellows, Jem, after all, for I have joined Messrs. ——," naming one of the largest firms in the building trade.

I opened my eyes in amazement, and he went on, "Yes, after the break-down of those experiments at Rotherhithe my father took me into his own counting-house a little while, but there's nothing to be got out of that wretched banking business now. The Joint Stocks are going to make a clean sweep of us." "Indeed," said Mr. Haughton, "your governor lives in pretty good style on nothing, then." "Oh, there's enough for him and the establishment at Broadfield Hall, but no margin for me, my boy. It takes 3000*l.* a year to keep up


the game there. So I must try my luck with one of his customers." They laughed, but I went away thinking what queer differences there are between middle-class notions of enough to live upon and those which we have.

But I was thinking also about the painter-gentleman's way of getting a livelihood ; and I thought (as Mr. Fletcher said) it was all very pleasant for Mr. Haughton, no doubt. Somehow I had come to think better of that gentleman, and I liked to see how happy he seemed to be at his work. Hard work of any kind seems to make any fellow the better for it. But at last there came the day when all the folks who had been drawing pictures for the exhibition of what he said was the Royal Academy, had to send them in to the judges, and that was not nearly such a pleasant piece of business. I could see the young man was mighty anxious about what they would say to his picture ; and though he tried to pass it off in a light sort of way, I knew he was in a great fright all the same about whether this

picture would be taken in by the "hanging committee," as he called it. And then at last there came the day when their answer reached him; and he sent for me to go up to his room one Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Taylor told me she thought he was rather down in the mouth; and sure enough there he was, sitting with one arm over a chair, and his head bent down on his hand, and he looked just like one of our fellows when the master's given him the sack. As he heard me come in he picked himself up, and said in a half-cheery sort of way, though I could see it was rather forced, "Well, Master Jem, we all have our luck, I suppose, good, bad, or indifferent, and now I have mine, and precious bad it is." "What is on now, sir?" I says. "Well," says he, "they won't take my picture, and all the work, I'm afraid, has gone for nothing; and there's worse than that behind. However, we must all bear our troubles like men, and there's no use whining about it, so here goes," and he handed his picture over to me, the poor picture he had taken

so much pains about (and very beautiful I thought it, and I wondered how any committee could have the heart to refuse it), saying, "There, take it away, my man, I can't bear the sight of it."

Soon he added, "Now, Master Jem, I want you to nail it down in that case and put a couple of leather straps on; d'ye understand? It's going to the picture-dealers." So I said I'd do it. But I could not help thinking, when I saw how wretched he was that evening and for some days after, and how he went and flung himself away afterwards, that it might have been better for him after all to have been only planing and cutting wood than painting all those beautiful figures which he had got on his canvas. But, lor' ! what a difference there is between doing pleasant things to get paid for them, or, at all events, expecting to get paid for them, and finding out that folks don't want what you have been working at so hard after all ! How curiously things do jump together sometimes ! I remember, full twenty years



after that Saturday, I was at one of those new places that were springing up all about, called "Workmen's Clubs," and as I came into the place I smelt a very savoury smell, and the steward looked up at me as I passed the bar of his kitchen, where he was making some apple-turnovers, and very happy he looked, and still more as if he enjoyed the thought of what the work was going to bring him when he had sold all his turnovers to the members. About half an hour after, when I was up in the bagatelle-room, up comes my steward with a tray full of beautiful pies, and showed them to the company, expecting there would be a general rush to buy them. Well, I could not get out of my head for some time the poor fellow's look of dismay and vexation when he found there wasn't one of the members inclined to fork out 2d. for the turnovers, and thinks I again to myself, "Oh, there's a deal of difference between pleasant work, and getting paid for it. The rough work after all, or leastways work for getting up those *things that folks fancy*

needful for their necessities and comfort, pays best, though it is not so pleasant, may be, doing at the time."

And this reminds me of what a deal of rubbish I've heard in my time since I mixed more with what are called the middle classes, about what they call a "genteel occupation." Thousands of unfortunate young fellows every year are brought up to be clerks of one kind or another, or "counter-jumpers," perhaps, because that life is supposed to be more genteel or respectable; and then, too late, they find they can't get even a bare living, and yet must keep up the outside look of a gentleman to have even a chance of employment. I've often wondered why tradesmen and clerks don't put their boys oftener to learn a trade, which would give them not only a better chance of a livelihood, taking all the year round, at least as far as clerks are concerned, but would give them, I think, a deal more interesting work to do than book-keeping, or quill-driving, or selling the same thing day after day over a counter.

A mechanic is always *making* some thing or other that's useful (and I remember Mr. Fletcher telling me once that a poet at first meant "a maker"), cutting or carving or putting together, and there's plenty of room for skill and for thinking about your work, and you see it growing under your hands, and then at last, when it's finished, why there it is, something to look at and use, and perhaps admire. But, when a shopman's done selling, there's not much left to look at; so that if a maker of useful things only knows how to do his work well, and takes a pride in it, his life in the workshop, spite of all the drawbacks, is a very happy one, and that helps mainly to make his whole life happy. But, then, there it is—so many workmen don't know or care how to do their work in the best way, and don't take any pride in it at all, but only want to get it done anyhow, and get paid as much as they can on Saturday night.

But if the middle class are foolish in the matter of gentility, so are some of the working-men themselves, for you'll often

see a man who's a bit cleverer than the rest so anxious and scheming to get out of the ranks of workmen—discontented and miserable, because he's expected to say "Sir" to his employer, and to "take orders" instead of giving them. But then I know this is sometimes the fault of masters and foremen, who don't treat the workmen as they ought to do. Still, I do say it is far better to make oneself a good workman than to try to get above your work and be called a gentleman. If it be said that I myself have got out of the hand-labour ranks, I answer that was because I was pressed by my master to take one job after another until I was an employer almost without knowing it. I didn't bother and chatter about becoming "genteel," and being addressed as "Esq.," which always seemed to me great flummery. I only tried to do as well as I could, whatever work was set before me; at least if I knew I was able to do it at all. That's the long and short of the matter.

As to getting rich, it seems to me that

money is made, in the long-run, *by doing what you don't like, and sticking to it.* And when you come to turn it over, that's the way, I rather think, in which all real, I mean lasting, success is gained in everything.

Of course there are lucky hits, and "flukes," as folks call them now-a-days, that bring in a lot of money or fame all of a sudden. But I've noticed that doesn't often stay by a man.

I had better mention here that Mr. Haughton left Mrs. Taylor's not long after his picture had been refused, and I thought when I happened to mention his name that Mr. Fletcher seemed growing shy of him, pleasant and sparkling as he was. I believe the disappointment sent him down-hill faster than he was going before; while success might have made a man of him. But I don't fancy he had ever gone the right way to get success anywhere. However, he still kept painting; sometimes, though, he did other things besides to get money, not quite so respectable. He was

a great deal too much at a certain theatre I know, and I was uncommonly sorry, one night, to hear that Kitty Barber had been sitting to him for what they call "a model." But cards, I heard, were his chief business.

There were several other workmen lodged in our house, or next door, besides myself, and many a curious talk we have had together when we met at a neighbouring "public," and sometimes (when we could do without a fire) a few of us would meet in a bedroom and sit on the truckle beds talking till bed-time, or stroll in the parks. I remember there was a Richard Fleming, carriage-window maker, employed in the Great Western Railway works at Paddington. Many a time I have sat up listening to his talk, though I cannot remember much of it now, except his pitching into "piece-work" one night, which he said was Old Nick's device for men working themselves into early graves just to give their masters fine houses and horses. "A fair price for 'day-work,' " he would say, "but, mind you, no devil of a foreman to drive

and nag you. Why should a fellow always be sweating and tearing along just to earn extra profits for his employer, and wear his own internals (he didn't use that word, but it's more polite) to fiddle-strings?" I have heard some men, though, stand up for piece-work as the best thing for the men as well as the masters, and it does seem a deal more fair for both parties, but there is a lot to be said on both sides. And, as Davie said, all work in the iron trade and most factory work is done and paid for by the piece. "Ay, ay," explained Fleming with a thump on the table, "but, all the same, it's a big shame men should have to work themselves to death to earn a fair wage. But, mind, mate, I don't complain of fellows doing it with their eyes open and of their own free will to put money in their own pockets. What I fight against is their doing it to put money in the employers' pockets. What do they care about us, I should like to know? Many a time I've seen a man that had worked well for the same firm for thirty or forty years, spotted

by the master, and then the foreman gets a hint that So-and-so is getting rather weak in his wrists or his knees, eh? Can't keep him on much longer! Then the poor fellow gets sacked." "True enough," said I, "but, after all, the man had received his wages all those years, I suppose. And it would be rather awkward for the masters if they had to give annuities as well as wages." But the remark wasn't very well received.

I remember another good fellow that used to crony with us, Jem Burt, who took to me because my name also was Jem. He was but a young chap, not used to town when he first came, so I could give him a wrinkle or two. He lodged with us at Mrs. Taylor's, and when I first knew him he hadn't been regularly apprenticed, and was what is called an "improver" at a large cabinet-maker's shop in the West-end. Well, one Saturday night he comes home regular down in the mouth—had got discharged, and no mistake. "What is it for, Jem?" says I. So then he told me how

he had always tried to do his best, but the foreman said he was a deal too slow ; they wanted work turned out sharp and quick, and "he didn't ought to spend such a lot of time over it." "And at last he said I had better go and try to get a situation in some amateur gentleman's workshop where they only did fancy-work, and where there were no customers. So," says Jem, "I'm blowed if ever I'll take pains with my work again, 'cept to get it out of hand and done with." "Ay, but," I replied, "there are other firms in the West-end besides ———'s, and at some of them you will find good work *is* cared for more than fast work, if I've heard rightly." Next week he went round to them all, but trade was slack, and there were more men being turned off than taken on ; and, as he had never joined a Trades' Society before he was discharged, he had no box to come upon, and the poor fellow was very hard up. We made a little levy for him, but of course that didn't last long.

One night, when he had come home in

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One night, when he had come home in


very weak for a long time afterwards. His mother was a fine, gracious lady, and when she went away thanked me in a manner I couldn't forget, and sent me, from herself and her son, she said, the books of all others I most wanted, but couldn't afford to buy, Nicholson's "Practical Carpenter and Joiner," and "The Builders' Practical Directory," huge volumes, and handsomely bound into the bargain, worth a mighty deal more than any little service I'd done for them. But I suppose Master Edward told her what would suit me.

When he was leaving he told me very sadly, I thought, that he was giving up all idea of business, and should probably go to Oxford or Cambridge again for a time. Talking about it in the evening, I said I wondered why he should go there, and Mrs. Taylor, who had been handsomely paid for her trouble, and who had got her apron to her eyes when she came down from his room, said she was pretty sure the poor young gentleman was thinking of "taking orders."

"Why, we take plenty of them," says Burt, who was always rather droll, even in his troubles, "and think ourselves lucky to get 'em, don't we, Woodford? What's the gentleman bothering about that for?" I didn't quite understand what all his trouble was about then; but both Mrs. Taylor and I knew it was something very bad indeed, if he were going to be a clergyman.

The poor young gentleman put the best face on it, however, that he could; and when he was going, and while I was helping him to pack up his togs, he talked away quite cheerful like, but rather fast and wild, I thought.

Then he went away, and wouldn't tell any of us where he was going; but when I tried to say a cheery word, and spoke of old times, just to show I knew what a gentleman he was, and how he came from a set of brave "ancestors," he gripped my hand tight, and couldn't trust himself to speak, for he was still weak and shaky, but hurried away to the cab that was waiting at the door.



CHAPTER XI.

As I said somewhere before, I didn't care to go as much to Broadfield while Roberts was going backward and forward, as I should have done, and as after father and mother were both at rest and I couldn't see them any more, I sometimes wished I had done. For, indeed, I thought a good deal of the old folks, and I know they thought much, p'raps too much, of me. I was their only child that grew up, and we loved each other dearly. But I thought they guessed—in fact, to make sure, I just hinted to mother one day—why I didn't come oftener at that time. I was glad Maggie and Davie were so happy together, and that I had helped to bring it about. But I wasn't bound to make myself miser-

able with seeing them together, and I was attending the Chartist Convention as often as I could, and reading besides all the books of every sort I could lay my hands on—Euclid among the rest—and I went long walks on the Sunday with Burt or some of my shop-mates, partly to give my mind something better to think of than a couple of young fools spooning about together.

One Sunday when I had gone home (it seems only the other day), I recollect dear mother saying, like the foolish fond mother she was (only foolish about me), “What makes you so glum, Jem, now-a-days? I should think there wasn’t any girl a young man like you mightn’t make up to, not any as I know, eh, father; isn’t Jem good enough for the best of them?” “Ah,” says father, looking up with his quiet queer smile, “James is a rare sensible lad, but I can’t say he’s much of a beauty.” Mother could not help laughing any more than me.

“And the girls think a great deal of good looks, you know, mother,” said I as soon as I could. “Well, let them!” cried

she, "and I say, though I don't think Jem had much to boast of as a boy, he's been growing a fine young fellow to look at—" "No, no," I interrupted, laughing outright, "you're a dear old mother, but that's a reg'lar bounce; and I see mothers are pretty much the same all the world over!" "I tell you what," said father, "he's a good son, and a neat joiner, and handsome is that handsome does." Then mother got up and came and kissed me. And I'm fool enough to remember it all, and write it down forty years after.

So, taking all things together, I was rather pleased when the younger Mr. Grapnell sent for me one day and said, "Woodford, here's an old friend of mine, a builder, down at Eastleigh, in Somersetshire, wants me to get him a good steady leading-hand for a large job he's got there. I think you would suit him. London wages. Would you like to go? But, if you do, you must stick to it, and promise not to leave for twelve months if he wants to keep you." I thanked him, and said I'd

like it very much, but I never had worked yet as a leading-hand. "Oh," said he, "Mr. Stone (our foreman) says you often set out the men's work for them, and that you are quite fit for it, so that's settled, and you must do us credit." Now I owed this promotion to the classes I had attended, and to working at geometry at nights, which I mention now for the benefit of my younger mates. But I was sorry to leave the Convention, just when Mr. Lovett, too, and his party wanted all the support they could get. And I told him so, but he only said cheerily (though his face always looked rather sad, I fancied), "Never mind, my man, you can do good work for the Charter down at Eastleigh as well as in London. Do your best, James, and I shall always be glad to hear from you." These words made me feel proud, and ready to do or give up anything for the good cause, though, indeed, the state of hundreds of thousands of my countrymen in all parts of the kingdom at that time, and for years after, was quite miserable enough to make

one go through fire and water to help them, without a word from my noble-hearted leader.

So I went down to that pretty little Somersetshire town, and dull enough I found it at first. There was a deal of building going on for the Squire, (who lived in a large hall about a mile off,) both in his own mansion and in the cottages and stabling; so there were a number of men in the building trades all lodging in the town, and I soon got pretty comfortable. Before very long I found that most of them were regular back-bone Chartists, and of course we took in several copies of the "Northern Star." But, just as it was in London, they were divided into two parties; there were the out-and-out Feargus O'Connor men and the admirers of William Lovett. I needn't say that the men *I* cotton'd to were the latter party; and one of the best men among them—a sort of leader—was named John Bembridge. He was superintendent of the Sunday School of a small dissenting chapel in the town, and when

he found what a warm partisan I was of Lovett's he took to me very heartily, and invited me to come and help him teach in the school. He was working at the Squire's, but for some time he had been living regularly in the town, and working for the resident builder who had got the contract. I spoke to him as soon as I well could about Jem Burt, and to my great satisfaction, as well as poor Burt's, he got him taken on to help make the Squire's new book-cases. When he came down (we had to send him the money to pay his fare) he looked a regular guy, and about as thin as the "living skeleton," so we advanced him a few more shillings to rig him out before going to work, for he wasn't hardly decent. "Oh, Jem," said I, "you've learnt your lesson, I hope, and mean to join your Trades' Union now." He assured me, eagerly, that if there was a lodge at Eastleigh he'd join the first pay-day after repaying us, and would have done so in London if he had got work. All the other cabinet-makers in the shop were in the

Union, so there was no difficulty in Burt's making this insurance against reduced wages or loss of employment when the money came in. More than once in after-years he said to me, "Can't think, Jem, how it is men don't all belong to a Trades' Union. What a miserable helpless lot we are without it!"

A curious feature in the Chartist agitation came before us one night at Eastleigh in this way. The Anti-Corn-Law agitation was beginning to be felt throughout the kingdom, and, as we have already seen, was even invading the agricultural towns of the South. Deputations from the Council, of its ablest speakers, were sent to most of the principal towns, but its paid agents penetrated everywhere. One of them, a Mr. Sidney Smith—a very clever, eloquent chap he was, too—took our Somerset town in the course of his travels, and was talking for about two hours in the large room of the principal inn, with one of the leading gentry of the place in the chair. Nobody but that gentleman would

have ventured to preside, for everybody else almost was dependent on the favour of the landowners and the farmers for a livelihood—from lawyers, doctors, shopkeepers, tradesmen and schoolmasters, down to the poorest working-man. Well, it was the tip given us from headquarters at that time to go to all Anti-Corn-Law meetings, and, after the lecture or speeches had been given, we were to move resolutions declaring that nothing would really meet the wants of the country and remove the terrible suffering which the Anti-Corn-Law lecturer truly described, except the passing of the People's Charter. So a tidy little knot of us had squatted ourselves together at one end of the room; and after Mr. Sidney Smith sat down, up gets our friend Bembridge with, "Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I rise to move a resolution which I think will meet the wants of the case better than anything going to be proposed by the gentleman who has given us this learned and eloquent address." At the first sign of opposition in the camp,

the whole meeting (which had been getting rather sleepy-like) gathered itself together and pricked up its ears amazingly; but they let Bembridge go on pretty quietly for the time, the more so as our fellows cheered him at every fourth or fifth sentence. Before long, however, there was a regular row. The chairman refused to let the speakers on our side go on, and at last the meeting broke up, like many another of the same sort, in confusion. We little knew *then* how much of what we had to complain about was caused by those abominable Corn Laws, and what a terrible mistake our leaders were making in hindering their speedy repeal. But there was a deal to be said for the mistake; as I've heard it said, we were something like a blind, helpless giant: we didn't know what to do or say, or, if a few of us did, like Lovett and Bembridge, Bronterre O'Brien, Moore, Vincent and Lowery, we could never get a chance of fair play or a hearing among the middle and upper classes.

But I ought to mention here that the

Anti-Corn-Law meetings were not the only ones at which Chartists in those days attended to move resolutions in favour of the Charter. They frequently attempted the same game at any public meeting called for any purpose, and I can't defend them at all on that road. I remember that in 1844 they appeared in force at a great meeting at Glasgow convened by Robert Owen and his friends to propagate the principles of Socialism. Here, however, they met with a determined resistance, and were beaten in the vote by a great majority. It is not generally known in these days that the Socialist party then had rather a strong Conservative bias in regard to Chartism. Robert Owen and his leading disciples, such as Alexander Fleming, Lloyd Jones, William Pare, Abel Heywood, G. J. Holyoake, and "Shepherd" Smith, contended that mere political reforms would be of little value, and insisted on the superior need of social improvement. Like Lovett and his friends, they were also earnestly desirous of promoting education,

and the magnificent building in Manchester now used for the Free Library, was built by a company of Socialists and educational apostles (of which Abel Heywood, I think, was chairman) for a Hall of Science, where lectures, classes, reading-rooms, &c., were held, to minister to the education of the operative class. The Socialist body at that time was very strong. They had above ninety branches in various parts of the kingdom, and subscribed their money with a self-sacrificing enthusiasm which, in spite of the professed atheism of some portion of the body, partook largely, I think, of the true religious spirit. The cross-currents, as one may say, of these two movements—Chartism and Socialism—would afford matter, I fancy, for much thought and study to those who care about the history of our English working classes; but I must not go further into the matter at present. But, no doubt, the great and (often though not always) beneficent development of modern co-operation is a result of that much dreaded movement,

which was once scarcely less hateful in the ears of middle-class and respectable Englishmen than that of Chartism itself. And the work of Owen in starting infant schools at his New Harmony, and in setting on foot plans for the rational recreation of the people, by means of concerts and tea-meetings (which latter great institution may be said to have originated with him), as well as the part he took with the late Sir Robert Peel in promoting factory legislation, should always be remembered to his honour.

Soon after I heard some of my mates one evening talking about a person who had started a cricket club, and who, they said, was doing a good deal of good in the parish, and he was the vicar's curate.

"Does a deal of good, does he?" said Bembridge. "I wish those persons 'ud show a bit more sympathy with working-men under their political wrongs. An ounce of justice is worth a ton of charity after all." But I didn't pay much attention to their talk, and none of us had any

great love for "the cloth." Not that we had any bad feeling towards them, but I believe we mostly thought the whole Church Establishment was a matter of money, and that all clergymen did and said their doings and sayings merely to get paid. So that we had rather a feeling of contempt for them, because we thought them so uncommonly like hypocrites. The same with regard to religion generally. There was very little real enmity against it, as far as I could see, among working-men. We only thought it humbug, and not worth a sensible man's troubling his head about. What we wanted was to see how we could make the best of this world, not of another. But Bembridge was putting other thoughts into our heads, when he talked about Christianity, if it meant anything at all, as meaning justice from the rich to the poor, and fair play in politics as much as in a street row.


One morning, as we tramped out to the squire's—I can see the sun now just rising over the trees in the park, and the

hares scudding home over the dewy, sparkling grass—Bembridge and the rest of us were boiling over with the thought of a meeting we were going to hold in a few days to welcome a Chartist of the name of Bartram, who was coming out of Ilchester gaol, where he had had twelve months of it for something the country beaks called sedition ; and we were all to go in procession to meet him ; and then he was to spin us a yarn at a public meeting at night. Of course this was nuts to me, and rare fun I thought it ; which, however, was a good deal more than the squire, or any number of country squires and parsons, were inclined to think of the matter. However, we all meant to keep strictly within the law ; and the meeting came off in the large club-room of the “Spotted Dog,” which was crowded in every hole and corner. Bembridge was called to the chair, and made a really fine speech, in which he drew the line very broad and strong between the *moral-force* Chartists, and those who wished to get the Charter

by *physical* force. He said the latter meant either losing heart a great deal too soon—for men must learn to wait patiently for all great and important changes—or else they had no real understanding of the principles of liberty, which must always be based on law and order, and that they only wanted to throw the country into confusion for the furtherance of their own selfish purposes. And then he expounded the principles of the Charter, and the need of education to use it aright, in a way I never heard before, except from the mouth of William Lovett. Then he introduced Mr. Bartram, who was of course much cheered, both when we met him at first near the gaol, and afterwards when he rose to speak at the meeting; but I can't say I was much pleased by his remarks. Not that there was anything violent about them; on the contrary, he seemed to have been regular tamed down by prison diet, and could only throw out a few big, commonplace things about Britons and their rights, and some of the pet phrases hashed up from

the *Northern Star*. However, before the Chairman rose to speak, wasn't I dumfounded at seeing one broadcloth gentleman in the room with a white tie, sitting close beside the Chairman, whom I recognized at once as young Mr. Fletcher. If the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Duke of Wellington had been shaking hands with Bembridge I should hardly have been more astonished; but though I knew him at once, his features were a good deal altered; he looked pale and thin, and yet there was all the old pleasant expression, with something added, which I liked better still, and had never seen there before. Towards the end of the meeting John Bembridge asked him if he would say a few words, which he did, and very sensible words they were, expressing his sympathy with the remarks of the Chairman, his earnest desire to see working-men have all reasonable redress for any real grievances, "but ventured," he said, "to remind us that we had duties as well as rights; his wish was to help us to do our duty, as far as it lay in

his power, but at the same time he knew he was bound, as a minister of the Gospel, to help us in obtaining our rights as citizens, as Englishmen, and as men." Of course that brought down great applause, and when he rose to go the men made way for him with great respect, many shaking hands. I heard afterwards that young Mr. parson got into a deal of trouble with his rich folk for going to the meeting, and that one of his church told him "he wished he (Mr. parson) had 'been in bed and asleep,' instead of going to the 'Spotted Dog.'" I could not go out after him then very well, but found out where he lodged, and wasn't very long in making my bow to him there one evening. He shook hands very heartily, made me sit down, and I should think we were talking as friendly as possible for two hours before I came away. "Well, Woodford," said he, "I suppose you wondered at seeing me down at that meeting in a white choker, but you know I was more than two-thirds on the way to it when I left Oxford and went into business.



And the fact is, Master Jem, I've had a deal to go through since I saw you last, and have learnt a few things which I shan't forget in a hurry. Perhaps some day I may tell you a little more about what has made a pretty considerable change in my notions of life, but the upshot of it all is that I gave up my idea of being a man of business, and have taken orders, as they call it, and become a church parson. After passing my examinations and getting ordained, and then knocking about a little time in London and the neighbourhood, I got the curacy down here, and have been working for about a twelvemonth in this place." "And a very pretty place it is, sir," said I, "but I think you must find it uncommon dull after London." "Dull!" said he, "I should rather think I do. I happened to see a picture the other day of Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, just after getting ashore, sitting in his cave on one of the boxes saved from the wreck, with his head resting on his hands, and looking about as miserable as if nobody had ever

been unhappy before, or at least half as unhappy as he was. You see that is something like what I felt when I first came down here, and never knew what real solitude was till then, or what it was to be eating one's heart out and carrying a cheerful smile on one's face all the time. What made it a good deal worse was that the two or three rich, educated folks here, belonging to my church, are about as hard and cold and proud as if they were a cross between Mammon and Beelzebub; so I never get any comfort in their society, I am sorry to say, though that may be partly my own fault. However, there is this good come of it, Woodford—I learnt to know and honour men of your class in a way I certainly never did before, and I suppose never should if I hadn't found my only comfort in life in sitting at the fireside of men like that John Bembridge, your chairman at the meeting the other night. A first-rate fellow that!"

"Yes," said I, "a very fine fellow he is, and a very fine speech he made."

"I tell you what, Woodford," said Mr. Fletcher, taking me up sharp, "I've learnt something from Bembridge and others since I've been in Eastleigh. I never knew till I came down here what a lot of blessings I had had till I lost them. But this I mean to do"—and his voice became rather husky—"if ever I get back again to that kind of life with all its pleasant parties and sociable evenings—to the music and drawing, and reading and talking with friends; to its dances, and concerts, and dinners, Jem, and all that sort of thing, which makes social life beautiful and delightful and refining, I'll bring the working men with me!" Seeing me staring at him, he went on, "Don't you see that most of these poor fellows have none of all these enjoyments—know nothing of the kind of life I lived for many years, and which comes so naturally to middle and upper class folk that we think nothing of it till we lose it; while working-men have only the public-house and beer-shop, and you know what that means. I've

seen a good deal of all the beastly work that goes on in those places and afterwards, and how the wives and children suffer from it; and all just because they must drink and drink as long as, and whenever, they want a little chat and a social glass. Heaven help them! and may it help me some day to bring them out of all that!"


He rose and walked about his little room, clenching his hands, till I said, "Thank God, sir, you've come down here, if that's what is to come of it, and I thank Him, too, for bringing you amongst men like Bembridge; but I could show you as good as he is up in London, and I only wish you knew William Lovett himself."

"Well," said Mr. Fletcher, "I wish I did know him; perhaps I shall some day. You must give me an introduction."

"But, sir," said I, "I thought you fancied us Chartists a desperate bad and dangerous lot; at least, you did when I last had the pleasure of knowing you." I didn't quite like looking the young gentleman full in the face as I said this, but I

could see he was colouring up a bit, and at first he didn't answer; but presently says he, "Well, Jem, I was very wrong-headed at that time about a good many things—Chartists among the rest. But one of the things that I have learnt lately is this: I had met John Bembridge on two or three occasions at the Mechanics' Institution (where, however, there are not many mechanics, but that is no fault of his), and not hearing anything of his political views, I always liked the sensible, manly way in which he had handled any subject he had to speak upon. For though he was a Dissenter, I used to go and call upon him, particularly when I should otherwise have been inclined to go and hang or drown myself: and I never failed to feel a better, wiser, and a stronger man for his company. Well, one night I had gone to see him as usual—he lived in a room over the Mechanics' Institution—and his wife, who took care of it, told me he was down at a meeting in the lecture-room. It was but a small place, and when I entered the

door I saw about twenty men, some of them in their shirt-sleeves, sitting round a long table, with Bembridge in the chair at the head of it ; so I was going to back out, when Bembridge gets up, comes forward and says, ' Come in, sir ; we're only having a bit of a talk about politics ; we shall be very glad to see you.' So I sat down by the fire and listened. But you, who know what I used to think about Chartists, can imagine what I felt when one of the company struck his brawny arm on the table, when his turn came to speak, and began, ' Mr. Chairman, though I'm as good a Chartist as any of you,' &c. What else he said I have no idea. To tell the truth, I had hard work to sit still ; I thought I had fallen into a regular den of thieves, and had it not been for my opinion of the chairman, I should certainly have made for the door pretty quickly, and never come near the place again ; but I didn't like to seem rude, after being treated so politely, and certainly I didn't wish to hurt my friend, the chairman's feelings. So I sat



it out for about half an hour longer, and then came away, hardly knowing whether I was on my head or my heels. Bembridge took an early opportunity of asking me what I thought of the meeting, and I guess he was not prepared to find such bitter, unreasoning fear and hatred of everything bearing the name of Chartist and Chartism as I confess I showed. However I listened quietly to a good deal he had to say on the matter, till I could stand it no longer; and yet I could not give up the subject altogether, and came to talk with him at an early day. Then it was he spoke to me in a way that I can tell you, Master Woodford, privately, I think I shall never forget to my dying day. He asked me (and you know how stern he can look sometimes) how I could find it in my conscience that, preaching the Gospel every week of my life, and asking men to follow Christ, I should take no thought of all the great and crying wrongs under which the poor of this country were labouring. 'Mr. Fletcher,' said he one evening, quite

solemnly, and in a way that seemed more like what I expect to hear some day before the Judgment-seat than anything I had ever heard before in this world, 'do you think that if Christ were on earth now, He would be content to be preaching smooth things for rich folks, or arguing about words and texts, and names and creeds, but never have a word to say about the sufferings of the people, and all the oppressions that are daily going forward under the name of law?' And then he spoke about class-legislation, and, on my word, he drew such a picture of the iniquities of the present state of things—social and political—that I went home, almost wondering how it was that any of the rich folks or the parsons dare to walk about the world, except in sackcloth and ashes. I must, however, do him the justice to add that when he was speaking at Mr. Bartram's meeting he did say the poor would have behaved as badly as the rich if they had been in their places. However, to make a long story short, he convinced me at last that if

Christianity meant anything at all, it meant justice from the rich to the poor, as well as honesty from the poor to the rich; that the strong ought not to use their strength—whatever the laws may say—in order to oppress the weak, and for their own selfish purposes; but to lift up the down-trodden, give light to them that are in darkness, ‘undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.’ All this became clearer to me by degrees. But then the terrible riddle was, What are the means to be used for bringing about a better state of things?”

“Oh, I suppose Bembridge was clear enough, sir, upon that point, too,” said I; “he showed you, I daresay, how we must get the power of making and altering the laws, if we are to have our interests fairly attended to?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Fletcher, “he said that when one set of persons make the laws for another set, they are pretty certain to make them for their own interests. Working men would be sure, he said, to have done the same; and that, in one way or another, all must get a

voice in making the laws they are called upon to obey ; that, in fact, the first step in obtaining fair play for all classes will be to get the People's Charter passed. I saw there was a great deal of truth in what he said, but could not go with him altogether. So then, by Bembridge's advice, I wrote Mr. Lovett all about it the next night (for I had written to him about his views on education before), and got back a fine answer, just like himself ; and there it is, if you like to read it," which, I believe you, I did.

The next Saturday afternoon I had the pleasure of a long walk with Mr. Fletcher, and I remember asking him whether he really now thought the People's Charter was the best way of getting just laws passed for the people, and the bad ones upset ?

" Yes," he answered very firmly, " I do now. I don't like the ' Annual Parliaments,' but we can't square everything in a great popular movement to our own taste. But as for the other points, I think they

are most important, though I could not see it for a long time. But Lovett's letter was very able, and then Bembridge invited me to a discussion on the subject where a number of his friends were assembled ; and for three weeks running I met them every Monday night, and we had a regular set-to over the merits of the Charter. At the end of the chatter, I honestly confess, I found that they had both reason and common sense, as well as a kind of religious principle on their side, and ever since that time I have always stood up for them, and for the 'Six points' wherever I was called upon to speak on the subject at all."

"What, have you become a member of the Society?" said I eagerly. For I was better pleased than almost ever in my life before.

"No," he answered, with a pleasant smile, "not quite *that*; I don't choose to rank myself with any political party, and you may depend upon it that I have quite enough to bear for taking the part of the Chartists at all. Besides, I don't want to leave this place just at present, as I think


I am doing some little good here ; and the day on which I joined the Chartist Association, or took the name of Chartist upon me, would certainly be the last but a dozen or two of my stay in this town."

Much of all this conversation seemed queer enough to me at the time, for I didn't even then quite understand what a name of horror and fear that of Chartist was among the middle and upper classes of the kingdom in that day. Of course, I knew it was disliked, but I had never fully felt with what hatred and loathing the word and the thing were regarded. It was the same thing in the minds of a vast number of persons with incendiarism, bloodshed, pillage, and universal disorder. The National Convention, of which we had entertained such great hopes, had been sitting in London for some time, but, I am sorry to say, not to much purpose, and some of the delegates showed a great deal more zeal than judgment; and I can't wonder at their behaviour and speeches exciting immense fear, and even disgust,

among the property-classes. The worst of the matter, however, was that men like Lovett in London, and Bembridge in the country, were not able to make themselves sufficiently felt by the rank and file of Chartist, or to get the real leadership. The mischief that was being done at this time by Feargus O'Connor and his partisans—working mainly through the “Northern Star”—is beyond reckoning. I believe that Feargus was himself sincerely desirous of seeing the Charter passed, and of giving the working classes of the country a much larger share of power than they then possessed; but the extraordinary vanity and jealousy of the man made the idea of rivalry, or even companionship in power, simply hateful to him; and his whole force was bent on keeping every man down in the Chartist ranks who had any ability for leadership, or who was supposed to have it by any of the Chartist body. The effect of this upon the movement was, of course, ruinous; all the best men in our body, all the men of real thoughtfulness and purity

of aim, were either silenced or driven from the movement by the suspicion and obloquy directed against them through the agency of Feargus and his supporters; and though O'Connor himself by no means openly, or, at all events, regularly, supported the policy of physical force, yet his words and speeches were continually framed so as to cherish a desire for it amongst his followers, and even to put them forward in the way of attempting it, while he himself prudently held back.

This is not the place for giving a history of the Chartist agitation, and I only want to jot down the impressions made on my mind at the time, and proved by after-events. I could see it all going on in miniature down in that little country town, and I know it was pretty much the same in every other part of England. But the O'Connorites had the enormous advantage of possessing the only recognized newspaper organ of the movement, and this they worked in the most unscrupulous manner for their own ends. Bronterre




O'Brien and one or two prominent men, seeing and writhing under the injustice and mischief caused by the one-sided character the movement was assuming, attempted at different times to start papers of their own. All, however, to no purpose. As too often happens, I suppose, in this world, the evil-disposed are more numerous and more successful than the men of thought and high principle.

As regards the particular fortunes of the Chartist agitation in our district, the meeting to which I have just referred brought on a sort of crisis, for the squire and many of his friends in the neighbourhood, getting thoroughly frightened, sent for our employer one fine day, and told him that they would not have any such "mischievous firebrands" in the place; and the squire said he would rather have the contract thrown up and pay the forfeit than that Bembridge and others should be allowed to continue in his employ; while all the squires and well-to-do folks joined in assuring our master that they should entirely withdraw their custom

from him unless he discharged the ring-leaders. Of course, our master at once gave John Bembridge and one or two more the sack, and assured the county gentry and clergy that he would never harbour dangerous, scheming characters again, and had got rid of all who were likely to do harm. It was a gloomy night for us all when Bembridge told us the news, and we sat with our heads in our hands, boiling over with anger and resentment, and meditating schemes of revenge.

Indignation and schemes, however, were all unavailing. The rest of us had to keep our necks in the collar and grind away, for it was our living, and we could better afford to do something to support our unfortunate leaders if we continued at work, than if we had gone out on strike, as we very much longed to do. A volunteer levy was made, of course, for we determined that, at all events, we would not let Bembridge leave the town; and clubbing our money together, with the help of a five pound note from Mr. Fletcher, we got




enough to start him and his wife in a little huckster's shop, which we hoped would support them, and would still enable us to have the benefit of his leadership and advice. But I am sorry to say—and I say it with shame—that some of our men “supported” the shop by dealing there, running up a pretty good score, and then failing to pay it. Added to his bad debts, Bembridge found, after a time, that he understood his trade much better than how to buy and sell groceries; so that before very long he saw that if he was not to be made a bankrupt, he must shut up the shop and accept a situation in a London furniture firm, which a friend had got for him, and where nothing was said or known about Chartists.

The matter was more serious, however, for good Mr. Fletcher. Several leading members of his parish, and his vicar, spoke to him in a way which he was not at all likely to stand; and before long, on receiving notice from his superior to resign his curacy, he resigned not only that, but his

position in the Church of England too, and tried for a time to work on as a nondescript conventicle preacher (according to the learned language of his late friends), by opening a room for Sunday worship and preaching on Sunday evenings. Of course he had a good many hearers among us workmen, and for the first time in my life I felt a real, deep interest in what is called religion. I don't exactly know why, but, as I said before, I never *had* cared much for anything I had heard either in church or chapel at any time. I used not to care even for going to hear Mr. Fletcher when he preached at the church, because it seemed rather tame and smooth, not hot and strong, as we used to have it at the Methody chapel in Broadfield; while Bembridge's Dissenting parson was so very hard at folks for their sins. That was right enough, I know, but it didn't help or instruct me much, and besides, he often shot over one's head a long way, so that I could not understand very much of *that*; and I thought that if I were to go to a place of worship downright,

and be called a "saint" or a "Methody" for it in the shop, I might as well go in for the reg'lar thing anyhow. But then, again, when I *did* go among the Independents or the Baptists—especially when they preached what they called Calvinism—it always seemed to me as if they were talking a deal of blasphemy and rubbish. I didn't believe a word of what the parson said, even when I understood it, which wasn't always. But after Mr. Fletcher came out of his fine church pulpit, and fired away in that low, long-ceilinged room, with its few flaring candles and bare black benches, he used to make religion something real like, and brought Christ's example and character to bear upon the sins of the world—both our own sins and those of all the nation, not merely scolding us for them, but showing how the Lord helps one out of them, and all in a plain, simple way, that to most of us was very helpful and satisfying. Poor Bembridge, in the midst of all his troubles, had that preaching to cheer him. *He* knew, and *we* knew, that he



had been helping one minister of religion, at least, to show working men that Christ and Christianity *did* mean lifting off heavy burthens and bringing them freedom and justice, as well as soup-tickets and tracts.

Before Mr. Fletcher had resigned his curacy over that row, he had invited me one evening to take a cup of tea with him at his lodgings, and in the course of our chat he asked me if I remembered a lady who had played the principal part in those private theatricals which I had been allowed to witness, after fitting up the little stage for them? "Yes, indeed," I said, "one would not very soon forget her!" He looked pleased, and took out of a drawer a picture, which I saw at once was the young lady he spoke of, and I knew by the smile on his face, and the way in which he looked at that bit of cardboard, that he had special reasons for liking to have it by him. So then he told me he hoped the lady would some day come down and keep house for him. "For," said he, "in spite of your and Mr.

Bembridge's company, it *is* rather dull here sometimes, and now *he* is going away." I am sure I hoped from the bottom of my heart he would have that fair young thing to brighten his lonely hours. If ever a man seemed able to make a woman happy, and deserved that one should keep him company in a snug little home, it was Mr. Edward Fletcher.

It was about a week after he had taken the room for his Sunday services that I had to call on him about the little Sunday-school we were trying to get together. I could see there was something very heavy on his mind, and before long he told me all about it.

"You see, Jem," said he, "the worst of the business is that other folks, besides the rich folks down here, don't think much of a parson if he isn't in the Church of England; and they fancy, too, that his means of livelihood must be very uncertain; and I have got a bad reputation now among my friends of being a desperate and dangerous character—I am supposed, in

fact, to be a Chartist leader, and ready for any amount of outrage and violence that may be attempted. My friends in London look upon me as a second edition of the Rev. Richard Stephens, hopelessly lost, in fact, in this world, if not in the next also. But the consequence of it all is that the relations of that young lady whom I once told you I hoped would be coming down here before very long, have put a stopper on the whole affair."

"Well, sir," said I, "but if the young lady knows her own duty, as well as her interest, she is the first person to be considered in the matter. What matters anything else? I suppose you can maintain her?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Fletcher, "I have enough for her and myself, too, or else I could not be preaching to those chaps in that old barn up there; but well-brought-up young ladies don't like very much to go against their own parents, and I don't know that they ought. So I am afraid I have seen the last of her in this world," he added; but his voice was growing rather

indistinct, and I could see, as he turned away, that it was some trouble to keep down his feelings.

But I didn't like to see him a'most blubbering like a whipped schoolboy, so I said, rather roughly, I'm afraid, "Oh, you mustn't take on like that, sir. We must all bear our troubles like men. It'll all come right by-and-by, depend upon it." Then he looked up at me quite pleasantly, instead of taking offence, and shaking hands, he said,—

"Thank you, Jem, thank you. . . . But if it don't, never mind. You're right, and thank'ee for it. We've got something else to do in this world, I fancy, than making ourselves comfortable in it—got to see what we can do for other folks' comfort, too, eh, Jem?"

"You have shown us *you* think so, Mr. Fletcher—aye, and you've made more than one among us feel it pretty strongly, I'm thinking."

There was a bright, and what I should call a dreamy look in his eyes for a

moment ; but the shadow fell again before long. So I did not say much more, but turned the conversation, and went away with a heavy heart, for I knew his trouble was great.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE beautiful Saturday afternoon, not long after that talk, Mr. Fletcher invited me to take a walk over the hills with my heaviest hammer, as he wanted to get some geological specimens ; and I mind well how we sat down when he had got what we wanted, on a rock looking over the country towards the Quantocks, and ate some cake he had brought.

“Jem,” said my gentleman at last, “I’ve let you into a bit of a secret about my love-affairs. I suppose you’ve some of your own?” It so happened that while we sat there silent, looking over that beautiful land far away into the west, where the sun was setting, I had been a dreaming of Maggie Thatcher, and think-

ing rather sadly how she'd never sit beside me, looking at a sunset, with her head resting on my shoulder, and my arm round her, as I had seen her and Davie together. So when Mr. Edward said that, I could not at first answer. But I did presently; it was such a comfort for once in my life to tell a real friend all I had gone through in that matter, and how it seemed to have darkened my whole life, and left very little happiness to come into it. I knew he had felt all the same himself, and so I just let out to him; but what with the beauty of the evening, and with never having told a human being before, but had kept it all crushed down, like, I did feel very bad, and made a bit of a fool of myself, maybe. But he took it all so kindly and gently, (far more kindly than I fear I did when he first told me of *his* trouble), and said I must try and forget my own trouble in thinking of Davie's joy. "You've got that blessing, Jem, for your comfort, which I have not, of knowing your friend will have her, and will make her a good husband." Then, as

we walked home in the twilight, he spoke about John the Baptist, and what a fine generous-hearted fellow he must have been, and he quoted to me a few verses of what John said of Jesus having the bride.

But he did me even more good, I think, when he said, as we parted, "John's Master give you strength, friend, to think of others more than of yourself." He preached on that thought next day, and I have felt better all my life for what he said that night—though it wasn't exactly about how to get the Charter.

My own stay in Eastleigh, however, and my chance—the first I had ever had in this world of getting real religious teaching that would stick by me—was soon to be cut short. For the storm which blew down the pine-trees didn't spare some of the scrub. Our master at Eastleigh was a fussy, fidgetty sort of man, always afraid of our doing him out of his rights in some way, uncommonly sharp about keeping time, and not wasting stuff; but a fair-dealing man on the whole; and when he saw I had

a conscience; as well as himself, and enough knowledge to put the men under me at their work in the best way for saving time and material, he became very friendly in a rough sort of manner. So much so that I was afraid some of my mates would get jealous, and maybe spiteful, which I found afterwards one or two of them did. For the mean beggars, when Bembridge and the other men were discharged, and we thought all the row was over, dropped a hint, when talking one day to the 'squire's butler, that one of the worst of the Chartists had been left, "just because he happened to be a favourite of the master's." So the 'squire came in a rage to the shop, and the master sent for me in the evening, and we had it out. I was rather proud of being a martyr, and spoke in a way I only meant for independence, but I should call it insolence now, as he did then. So, according to his promise to the 'squire, I had my discharge, too; but I saw the good man was a bit troubled; and when he said to me at the pay-table on Saturday,

—"Woodford, I'm sorry to part with you, as you know, for you've always been steady and up to time, and served me well. But you needn't have been so rude, young fellow"—I cut in at once, "Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure. I didn't mean anything disrespectful, but you know, sir, we working men are used to speak roughly, and be spoken to in that way, from the time we were boys, and we don't mean it half so bad, sir, as it seems to you gentlefolks." That pleased him, and he said quite friendly like, "No, no, I understand. But why can't you leave politics alone—leave 'em to those who know a deal more than you do?"

"Oh, sir," says I, "there's one thing those who make our laws don't know half as well as we do," and then I couldn't help tipping the wink to some of our men standing round, just to encourage them to hold on.

"What's that?" says he.

"Where the shoe pinches," says I, and then they all laughed, and the master

looked black again ; but he shook hands with me, and said, " Well, well, good-bye, Woodford. If all Chartists stuck to their work as well as you, *I* shouldn't mind if the whole trade went for the ' Six Points,' or a dozen more."


When I got back to town, of course the old folks saw me pretty quick. They looked cheery, " Though father," said mother, " be sadly troubled with rheumatiz." They told me that young Roberts was out of work, as there was little doing, and the newest comers, unless they are leading hands, of course get discharged first. " But, I suppose, he and Maggie Thatcher are as thick as ever ?"

" Well, I don't know about that," answered mother in rather a queer way. " I don't think it's all as smooth as varnish there."

I felt sorry, but didn't like asking any more. I knew if there was anything wrong I should hear about it from Davie himself pretty soon. But I had a shrewd guess as to the point where trouble might come from.

I came to my old masters, who hadn't bothered their heads much about Chartism, and though they looked rather glum when I honestly told them why I had left East-leigh, they were soon satisfied that I had no more mischief in me than when I had left them, and I was soon put on, and back among my mates in the old shop. I was glad enough, too, to find there was a corner for me in my old lodgings.

Mrs. Taylor's reputation as a kind, motherly sort of landlady generally kept her house full, and for some time there had been two cabinet-makers, with their wives and children lodging on the second and third floors. But the trade was in a bad state, and the poor fellows were working for very low wages, so that the children looked half-starved, and had scarce a shoe to their feet. The men were steady enough, but they didn't get enough to keep the life in them, and there was trouble to spare when three of the children were down in a low fever. Two of the poor little things died, and then the two families cro



into three rooms, where even then they were better off than scores of men, who, to my knowledge, had but one room for bedroom, parlour, nursery, and kitchen, as well as wash-house, with four or five children. All this time the men saw their masters living very comfortably and seeming to make a good income. No wonder they fancied said masters got more than their fair share of the profits of the business. But what they didn't see, as I have since, was the worn anxious looks of the masters who had to go into the "Gazette," and leave the pleasant homes to which they and their wives and children had been accustomed half their lives. The men often feel the pinch of poverty sorely enough, but they little guess what anxieties, sleepless nights, and other miseries the employers have in bad times, when money is "tight" and bills can't be discounted, or customers don't come, or don't pay their debts. Aye, friends, I've seen both sides of the picture in my day, and sad enough they both are.

The journeymen cabinet-makers, like many other journeymen, however, never having been masters, only saw their own troubles, and thought it very hard they should be suffering so bitterly while the masters were enjoying all the comforts, and most of the luxuries, of life. So they talked the matter over, and settled that the employers could afford, at all events, a *small* increase in wages—say two shillings a week. Then they held meetings, and the pinched, sallow faces of those who came told sorrowful tales. They sent in their united application, and the masters met and conferred. Some could, no doubt, have very well afforded to give the increase, but others with less capital or business-like talent, and, perhaps, therefore, with inferior workmen, would have been nearly, if not quite, ruined by an advance. Besides, as they all agreed, “what’s the use of giving more wages? The men would only spend it in drink; for the more they get the more they want, and high wages always mean hard drinking.” There was enough truth in these remarks

to make them generally applauded; and yet it was a cruel shame to tar us all with the same brush. I'm not going to defend my old mates through thick and thin. For I know how disgracefully many of them did waste their money, and damage their health, by taking a drop too much, and how many of them might have had comfortable homes, if they hadn't spent their wages as fast as they got them. But then, gentlemen, say I, whose fault was it that these poor fellows were never taught better? Who gave them no end of public-houses and these cursed beer shops, but never a school for a hundredth part of them, nor a place where they could go to for a chat and a pipe except the pot-house—nor decent dwellings that were fit for human beings? I know the men in my day drank very hard—lots of them in every trade, some trades worse than others. One of the best workmen I ever knew, a brick-layer, was telling me only the other day how he had often heard the men, thirty years ago, on a Monday morning, when

they came on the scaffold, "boasting how jolly tight they had got the day before; while now," he said, "a man who talked in that way would be called a d——d fool for his pains." Oh, yes, workmen drank hard in those days, and so did the gentlefolks, who hadn't half so much excuse for it; and if the manners of the gentry are improved, well, so are those of the workmen, as my friend, the bricklayer, observed. No doubt there's still room for improvement. The whole system of fines and footings, payable in drink, is bad to the core (though there's not as much of it as there was). And then again, those benefit clubs got up by landlords to bring custom, are generally a cruel nuisance. They seldom have members enough to make them safe. Those they have grow old, and no young ones will enter, so that there's nothing but disappointment and loss for a great majority. All this teaches poor men to be afraid of saving, and Heaven knows that's not the lesson they need to learn. It is the large societies, Oddfellows,

Foresters, Hearts of Oak, Royal Standard, Shepherds, Druids, and such like, or the Temperance Benefit Society, that are the only safe clubs for working men. But even with them there's a great deal too much to be spent in drink when their lodges and courts have to meet, as is generally the case, at a "public." I've known many a man spend a shilling in saving sixpence, till the wives wish their good men had never joined the club.


Davie Roberts, as I said before, signed "teetotal" at one time, and I rather respected him for it. I've seen a deal of nonsense and bigotry among teetotalers, but there's a noble and a brotherly spirit at the bottom of it, and I'm certain the good they've done during the last forty years passes belief. I can't say I ever felt called to join myself. Perhaps I ought, but then, never taking more than a glass or two, I didn't see any need to swear I'd take none at all. True, steady men are wanted to join, as I've heard 'em say, to make it a respectable thing to belong to a teetotal

society. If only tipsy folk joined—well, it would be a disgrace to belong to it. But weak brethren can go into it without shame when clergymen and ladies and all the sober swells are there before 'em. Still I know I was doing good in my way, by showing my mates I could take a pint and stop there, or leave it alone altogether. I suppose it's true, what Mr. Fletcher once said, I remember, that we all have our mission, and I think that was mine. But it would have been a bad job for old England if the teetotalers hadn't fulfilled theirs.

But to go back to the cabinet-makers and the masters. They soon agreed that the trade would not afford any advance in wages, and they promised to stand by one another. When their answer came, most of the men were for a strike; but their leaders and officers said it was "no go." They declared the men wouldn't hold out two months, and the employers would get enough men from the country long before that, to do all the work that had to be done, which was not much after all.

"There isn't enough union among us," they urged, "to fight and win. Wait a bit till we've doubled or trebled our Union members. Then we *may* have a chance. But it's sheer madness to strike now."


The leaders prevailed, as they often do. Folks make a great mistake who fancy it is the leaders of Trades' Unions that stir up the rank and file to strike. Far oftener the latter push on their officers, and go to war in spite of safe advice. It used to make me uncommonly cross to hear the nonsense gentlefolks talk about strikes. Why, one would think a child might see that, as a general rule, it can't be for the interests of the officers of a Union to whittle away its funds in strikes, for then, of course, there's so much less in the box for the officials' salary, while the best and leading men in a trade are usually sure, without strikes, of as good wages as the trade can afford. In this case, I believe, they were quite right to resist their followers. There wasn't a chance for them. But I was main sorry for the poor fellows



who had got families and had to muddle on in such a miserable way.

Jem Burt turned up one day as I was leaving work, looking as blank as a dead wall. When the job was finished at Eastleigh for the 'squire's furniture, he couldn't get work there or anywhere else in the district, so he had tramped all the way up to London ; and as he now limped along by my side, hungry, shivering, and foot-sore, he told me how he had had to spend most of the tramp-money allowed him by his Lodge in drink at the public-houses where he slept each night, so that in fact he was half-starved, and as weak as ditch-water. It is a bad job, I may remark, for men on tramp that, in general, there's no lodging-house for them but where more than half their allowance must go in beer. Things are somewhat mended in this respect since my time, but it's bad at the best. Even the steadiest have to order at least a pot while they are in the house, besides what they drink on the road ; while the temptation to take more while chatting

and smoking at night is very great. Some shabby chaps are not ashamed to sponge on a poor tramp till all his travelling-money's gone, and in either case he has nothing to pay for a breakfast next morning. So there he goes creeping along with an aching head and an empty belly, eight or ten miles, till he gets to the next "house of call." Years ago I heard that the "Amalgamated Engineers," feeling strangely these hardships of the tramp system, voted, by a majority of all their Lodges, 10,000*l.* to provide lodging-houses apart from the public-house in all the principal towns of the kingdom. But, as usual then, the law was against the honest workman, and on the side of the brewer and publican; for the "Engineers" were advised that such an appropriation of their funds would be against law! and they had to give up the sensible notion. Poor Burt had come in for his full share, and more, of these hardships, and my heart ached for him as I looked at him sideways. But I had to tell him again plainly, as I had done before,



that I thought he was a deal too soft in the matter of standing treat and "tossing." Pounds and pounds that young fellow had lost by want of firmness, and *he* was better than many I've known. But you can't wonder that men, especially the younger ones, don't like to be disagreeable with their companions, or be chaffed and sneered at by them, and the landlord too, when they go for a little enjoyment—the only pleasure they get all day. I have heard it said that, above all things, the British workman hates being thought shabby; and I've noticed it's true. Besides, they know they've no right to sit by the landlord's fire and not drink something for the good of the house; only the worst of it is, as I used to find sometimes to my cost, the pint so often brings on the pot, and the pot the gallon, and though we needn't always pay for it on the nail, Saturday night brings a heavy reckoning. I believe that most of the men, though they want their pint, care more for the "company" than the drink, when they've had a glass or two; and one

of the best things ever done for them is getting them these places where they can take it or leave it as they like, and yet be as sociable as they please. Many a time I've had to order another pint because I had got into a good discussion; but I seldom took more than my reg'lar allowance myself, and following Kelso's advice given when I first came to town, I used to hand on the "extra" to any chap out of work who happened to be in the house, or perhaps to a mate on the tramp. And perhaps here's the place for saying that, talk as teetotalers will against the "public'," many's the good talk I've had in the tap-room of our "House of Call" in Kentish Town, over our pewter, and many a good wrinkle I've picked up, besides getting plenty to think about. Not that I ever liked the place in itself, and it's a stupid beastly way of paying for the accommodation of a room and a fire, by ordering so much drink; still, there used often to be real good talk in the tap-room, and particularly in the bar-parlour (though that cost

more), and in the parlour one is not so much in danger of being interrupted by drunken, rowdy fellows. In the tap-room we were always at the mercy of any vagabond who chose to turn in and squat down among us. But, with all its drawbacks, I say there was much to like in the cosy old rooms with their bright fire, and the feeling of perfect freedom (of independence of all masters and foremen and rules and regulations) with which you stretched out your legs there and ordered your pint. But all that seems gone now, and only a great flaunting "bar" put up instead, where there's a deal more drinking, and no real conversation, and no rest. It's a vile change for the worse, except indeed that anything which makes workmen dislike the "public" and take to one of these social clubs instead, is a change for the better.

I daresay, if anybody but working men should read these pages, they'd begin to think there's a deal too much said in them about the public-house; but working men themselves well know I can't help it, be-

cause they know how largely that British institution, as I've heard it called, enters into the daily life of most workmen, and that I could not truthfully describe my life and that of my mates without frequent mention of it. But I needn't say that I've known many respectable houses, and landlords too, who have been real good friends to working men and their societies; but no doubt the general tendency of the trade is demoralizing, and working men know too well that the way in which we have to go to the "public" for all our business, company and amusement, is a great curse to us.

However, to return to Jem Burt, he was down-hearted indeed, I can tell you, when he found he had walked all the way to London and went round to the "houses of call" (not next day—he was too ill, and had to rest a bit), but to no purpose. True, it wasn't as bad as before, because now he had something from his Trades' Union—little indeed, but enough to keep him from starving. There were hundreds worse off than himself, for they had their families to

keep, and Jem hadn't made a fool of himself yet, by taking a wife and having a heap o' children. But there were too many 'prentices in the trade then.

Help came to them at last, poor fellows, and from those who used to be called "our natural enemies." French polishing had come in, and of course cabinet-makers were the first to learn it. Burt very soon took a good place in the new line, and the wages they earned for a time were good to begin with, and kept rising. Then more and more men pressed into the trade, till they were all in as bad a way as before they left their old trade; in fact, I think they couldn't earn, when things came to the worst, more than about 16s. to 18s. a week. We know what that means for a respectable mechanic in a large town. So at last they held meetings and formed a Trades' Union, and wages soon went up again to a reasonable figure, from 30s. to 35s., and have kept pretty steady ever since. But that was some time after.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF course I was among my old Chartist friends the first night after I got back. Mr. Lovett gave me a very kind welcome, as did many others. But neither he nor they were very well pleased with the way things were going on in the Convention. It seems that although instructions were given to the missionaries whom the Convention were now sending out "to refrain from all violent and unconstitutional language, and not to infringe the law in any manner by word or deed," a Mr. Cobbett, a delegate from Yorkshire, was so alarmed by the proposal to send out missionaries, that, as he could not get the Convention to confine its business to the presentation of

the national petition, he withdrew. Mr. Lovett also told me, as he says in his memoirs, that, owing to an unfortunate delay in presenting the National Petition, the physical force party had taken great offence; they had formed a society called the Democratic Association of London, at the head of which was George Julian Harney, a very zealous and enthusiastic Chartist, but unfortunately, says Lovett, one of the most indiscreet and violent amongst them, "for he scrupled not to flourish his dagger at public meetings, by way," as Mr. Lovett slyly adds, "of giving 'point' to his 'perorations.'"

Lovett, however, afterwards did justice to the great and beneficial change that came over this eloquent firebrand, by adding a note in his book as follows: "Our friend Harney has since redeemed his past violence and folly by his intelligent conduct and moderation in the cause of right and justice." And I am glad of the opportunity of adding that I believe any one might now be proud of Mr. Harney's friendship; for in his

adopted country across the Atlantic he has shown what a valuable citizen a youthful hot-headed Chartist may become when arrived at years of discretion. However, at that time all such violence was, of course, most mischievous; and yet, to please a man of this stamp, O'Connor called the public meeting at the "Crown and Anchor" on March 11th, 1839, "at which," says Lovett, "the physical force party displayed such violence and folly as to cause the Birmingham delegates, Messrs. Salt, Hadley, and Douglas, to secede from us." But now mark the consequence of the sober men in any movement withdrawing from it because of the violence or folly of the rest! The mischievous folks had been in the minority previously; but the resignation of the Birmingham men, followed, as it unhappily was, by many other resignations, left vacancies which were now filled by men of headstrong and unprincipled character. It was now also that the Convention began to consider the question of what they called "Ulterior

Measures"—to be adopted if the petition should be rejected. A good many felt confident it was impossible Parliament could reject a petition signed by 1,283,000 persons, all of them genuine signatures, from men who were sincere in their convictions—a petition which was nearly three miles long, and which had to be wheeled into the House of Commons on great trucks. Others, however, said there was no limit to the injustice, and despotism of the present Parliament, and they were anxious to consider what should be done in case not merely the petition, but a motion for the People's Charter, were rejected by the so-called representatives of the people. Pushed on by the London Democratic Association, the Convention proceeded to discuss, at first in rather an informal way, proposals for a run on the banks : a general suspension of all labour (what I referred to before as "the Sacred month"); a recommendation to the people generally to provide themselves with arms; and other steps of a similar and very revolutionary

character. Then, in order to add fuel to the flame of excitement, both in the Convention and throughout the country, occurred the dismissal of Mr. John Frost, which I have already mentioned. Later on—the 10th May, 1839—came the arrest of Henry Vincent on a charge of conspiracy and sedition at Newport, and Feargus O'Connor brought forward, for the second time, his motion that the Convention should adjourn to Birmingham.

After Mr. Lovett had given me a little idea of the present state of things, said I, “And what, sir, do you think, then, of doing?” “Well, Woodford,” said he, “a few of us have taken a room at the “Arundel” Coffee House (where a number of delegates are lodging) for general discussion on all these matters when we’re not at the Convention. If we can only come to some reasonable conclusion about these ‘Ulterior Measures’ among ourselves before they are formally introduced to the Convention, we may have a chance of wiser and more prudent courses

being adopted." This seemed to me a very sensible step. Lovett was, of course, appointed secretary, and before very long had drawn up an admirable manifesto to be issued to the people of England. I say "admirable," although I could not go along with the whole of it; and I ventured, after it had been read to the Convention, to observe that I didn't think he would have agreed to some proposals which the more *extreme* party had been urging. "No," he said, "I do not altogether approve of them, I must honestly tell you, but one must give up something for the sake of union and for the good cause. You see, Woodford, we can never have our own way altogether in this world, and must make concessions occasionally, so long as we don't compromise our principles." I saw the truth of this; and, besides, I had great confidence that from the influence which Lovett still possessed in the Convention, and all over the country, he would be able to keep a heavy drag on the more outrageous motions of the O'Connorites.

He had something of the same confidence himself, as he admits in his memoirs ; but his unfortunate and most unjust imprisonment shortly after upset all his calculations. The manifesto ought to be read at full length by any one desirous of understanding the state of things at the time ; but it is too long to give here.

It was a curious change, and, in its way, a great relief from all the work and worry of the workshop and the Chartist meetings, to go down on Sundays sometimes to the quiet Broadfield village, where everything seemed so lazy and peaceful. It seemed to cool one's fret and fever, and put a few good thoughts into the mind, when I sat out of doors, looking up to the blue sky, or when, for Mr. Fletcher's sake, I went now and then to church. I used to take poor Burt down with me sometimes to cheer him up a bit while he was out of work, for father and mother would always give a kind welcome to any friend of mine. Mr. Stokes, from whose talks with father I first got a glimpse at politics, used to

come across from Ockerton now and again, when it was a fine Sunday, especially when he thought I'd be there, to hear all I could tell him about Lovett and the Chartists. I was very glad to get a chat with him too, for he had lately been over to America (the States), and had a mighty deal that was curious and instructive to tell us about what he saw there.

One afternoon, just as we were all sitting down to tea, I remember Davie and Maggie dropping in, so we made quite a large party. But why I speak of it is that I mind father saying something about a stupid young chap he had been trying to teach carpentering, and could make nothing of him; and then Davie saying, "Aye, sir, he must be a lout, for a fellow should be only too glad to get such a chance as you'd give him." Then we went on talking about how hard it was now-a-days to get anybody to teach anything—both Davie and Burt saying how bad it was for a lad (or a grown man either) to learn anything in a shop; whereon Maggie asked what reason

there was for this. So we told her (for we all agreed about it) that it was partly because men are afraid of being ousted by younger fellows, whom they may have taught to take their own places, and it's not being anybody's interest to teach them—partly the foreman “driving” them.

“But,” said Davie, “perhaps its chiefly because you get ridiculed so, if you don't know anything, and have to ask, or if you happen to make a mistake.” “Yes,” said Mr. Stokes, “English workmen are so confoundedly ready to laugh at a fellow; but it's quite different in America. There they never seem to think the worse of you if you don't know how to do a thing, leastways, they don't show it, if they do; but they just give you a lift, and put you along good-humouredly. I worked in the States years ago, soon after I was out of my time, and I've been in their shops again lately, and it's always the same, as far as *my* experience goes. May not be so with others.”

Says Maggie, "That's very nice of the Yankee-doodles. What's the reason of the difference?"

"Can't tell, I'm sure. Perhaps because there's more room in that big country," and he began elbowing right and left of him, and set us off laughing. "The good humour doesn't all get squeezed out of a chap as it often does here, where one man so often envies another man his berth, or his wages, or his fine home, or anything that is his, as the catechism says, don't it? You see there's more plenty of everything over there, work and wages and food, and the very days seem longer, —and so they are not so strict, either, about Union rules, and aren't afraid of teaching a poor beggar, lest he should become a rival some day; and then they don't mind working at two or three trades at once."

"I think I shall emigrate to America," said Davie thoughtfully.

"Yes, it would just suit you," said Maggie, with that pretty twinkle in her

eyes we knew so well. "You know you can't bear being chaffed."

Davie looked very much as if he couldn't. So I said, "It's all the more nasty of English workmen to ridicule one another, because if there's one thing they hate most, it is being laughed at." Davie gave a side-glance at Maggie.

"Aye," said Mr. Stokes, "but that's because we are all so consumedly proud." Maggie returned the look to Davie.

"But there's another thing," said my father, lighting his pipe, "of which all Englishmen, it strikes me, whether they be rich or poor, are a deuced deal more afraid of than ridicule, and that is of being thought to do something that's mean and shabby. I rather fancy that is often one reason why they can't bear being ridiculed. And I believe that fear of doing anything thought dishonourable by one's mates is stronger among what are called the lower classes, than the higher—except the nobility."

"Yes," said Mr. Stokes, "for the nobs

have nothing else to fret about. I believe there's more honour among costermongers, and among thieves, too, for that matter, than among City gents."

I ventured to ask why he thought so.

"Why you see every week in the newspapers how the City men let their sureties in for guarantees, and backing bills and such things. And I've a brother a clerk in the City (worse luck for him, poor fellow), who tells me how *he* sees it going on. But a costermonger who diddled his mates in that way could never show his face at Covent Garden; and a thief who betrayed his pals would be safe to be kicked to death, or split upon, the very first chance."

We all agreed to the correctness of Mr. Stokes' view.

"Maggie," whispered Davie, in rather a hard sort of way, and leaning back with one arm over the back of her chair, so loud I couldn't help just hearing, as I was next to him, "Maggie, shall I tell you what some fellows are more afraid of than either

of what those gentlemen have been naming? Doing anything to vex their dearie."

"Women are quite as much vexed when they pain their sweethearts, sir, as men," whispered Maggie, bridling up, and with such a mixture of sweetness and sauce as might have made a fool of any man.

So I guessed, as I did when they entered, that they had been having a tiff on the way. Soon after they got up, wished us all good evening, and went away—she looking like a queen, and he as handsome as a play-acting hero on the stage.

"That's a fine, clever fellow," said Mr. Stokes, between his puffs, when they were gone, "and she *is* a bonny lass. I always said she would be. But he seems rather uppish, eh? What you may call a bit conceited, eh?"

"Well," said I "he *is* very clever. And don't you know, Mr. Stokes, how hard it is for one of us working-men to be very clever and not to be conceited? By-and-by, when we are all better educated, it won't be such a wonderful thing to be


clever, and a sharp chap like Davie won't seem such a rare sight to himself or his companions."

Mr. Stokes appeared to consider that rather a deep remark, and thought over it.

Now as to what follows I can't say it's quite pleasant telling it all, yet it may be of use to some, both men and maidens; so, if I tell anything at all, I may as well give the whole of what I remember, but some of it was told my friend, not to me, and so, as before, I got him to fill up what he knew and I didn't.

What happened then was something like this, I believe. Davie, as I said, was out of work, and had to report himself every morning at his house of call, so that he could only go down to Broadfield occasionally. Two or three jobs had been offered him, but unluckily he wasn't up to them for want of better training. There was one, I remember, where a tough bit of staircasing had to be done, and which would have been many a pound in his pocket if he could have taken it; but he


could not. So when I saw this, I said to him, "Why don't you make use of this holiday-time to do a bit of study? Here's a fine chance for you to make up for your lost time. Don't you see how many a man is walking the streets with his hands in his pockets because he has only learnt the lower branch of his business, or it may be only one little bit of it. If you will go and enter at some drawing-school, I will help you to the mathematics, and then we will see if we can't get some old hand for a suitable consideration to let you into the mysteries of stair-casing, and even hand-railing, too, it may be." However, it was all of no use. He did try a little, and then gave it up. He never had enough perseverance in him, I believe. But still, any working-man knows how the being out of work weighs upon a fellow's spirits, so that in nine cases out of ten the leisure-time he gets when at "play" (i.e. out of work) is no good to him, either for amusement, or study. And, talking of this play-time, gentlefolks who speak about a workman's wages, and say



that so much is quite sufficient to keep him and his family in comfort, don't consider how many weeks in the course of the year workmen (especially in some trades) have nothing whatever to do. Many is the family that would no doubt be very comfortable all the year round if "the good man of the house" was in work all the time at a certain wage; but indeed it is very different.

I could see how this state of things helped to make Davie now and then very fretful; and I daresay poor Maggie found it out to her cost, too. He was one of those excitable dispositions which somehow are always in extremes; and consequently he was often just as flat, as at others he was like a gingerbeer bottle; so that after a time, when he did go to Broadfield, he generally went mooning about in a silly sort of way, not making himself very agreeable to anybody. Maggie Thatcher, of course, had plenty to do in looking after her sick mother, her drunken father, and the poor little children, so that often when

Davie came she was in anything but holiday trim, and could not do much to raise his spirits or even to give him any of her time. Kitty, however, was always ready to give him *her* company, and was lively enough no doubt, so that I think he saw quite as much of her as he did of his regular sweetheart. I am sure this did him no good, and *he* must have been pretty sure of it too; for I recollect his saying to me on one occasion, with a great smite on his forehead, "I tell you what it is, Jem; I don't like this way of going on at all, it doesn't suit me; Maggie's generally in a fret or a fidget when I am down at Broadfield; and whenever I go with that pretty little flirt Miss Puss-in-Boots (you recollect her?) it makes me feel a worse fellow than ever. It makes me up to all sorts of mischief, and, oh lor! how she does make me laugh at the parson and all his chatter. Then, when I go with Maggie Thatcher, it is all the other way. She's as wise and as clever as she's handsome and good; but then, you see, Jem, she knows it. And I



don't like being lectured and tutored even by so wise and handsome a girl as Maggie." So that I could see the end of it was he found it a great relief to cut the Thatchers and go and chat and laugh and romp with that silly Puss-in-Boots.

But if friend Davie would not make use of his opportunity of learning himself, he began to take Maggie in hand and tried to teach her. The poor child no doubt had faults enough and to spare; but it's awkward to have one's lover sifting them out, and telling one all about them. Matters came to a crisis, it seems, one evening, when her lover, having come to the cottage and sat there some time without speaking, says Maggie, quite briskly,—

"Why, Davie, you look out-and-out glum to-night; you haven't a word to cheer us with, and you haven't been here for a week before, and we're all as dull as dead mice."

Davie didn't brighten up much at this speech, and they sat looking at each other rather dismally for a minute or two. Then he said,—

“Come for a turn in the lane.”

Maggie was puzzled, and felt cross, I dare say.

“How can I leave all this work, I should like to know?”

At last, however, she came and went with him out of the cottage into the lane. Then her lover began, rather hesitatingly,

“I don’t know how it is, Maggie, but we don’t seem to make one another quite as happy as we used to do when I come to see you now; you always seem to be in such a way.”

“But, Davie dear, you know,” began Maggie in rather a troubled tone, and then she stopped. So Davie took up the running again, saying,—

“And then you must let me tell you, my pet,” . . . then, going on insinuatingly, “You have a queer temper, you know, Maggie. Now I don’t want to be cross about it, you know, my darling, but I can’t help telling you it has often sent me away from you so miserable, you can’t think.”

"Temper?" said the girl slowly, and reddening up.

"Yes, Maggie; it's no use stuffing it down, so I must speak. We can't go on in this—"

Here Maggie broke in rather fiercely.

"Temper? well, I'm likely to have a temper I should think! What with mother a-fretting from morning to night, and father a-nagging of me, and coming home drunk every Saturday night, and cross as a singed cat all Sunday, and no money coming in, and the children everlastingly after me for something or other, and fretting their poor little hearts out for want of fire or food, or something—love it may be; oh dear!"

"It's that last you're a wanting of, Maggie, my dear, to keep you from fretting—"

"Maybe it is; but you don't seem like to bring me any of it—talking about my temper indeed, and casting up old scores against me. Oh dear! I don't see much good in living at all. What

on earth I wonder were we all born for ? ”

Here Maggie sank down dejectedly on the old stile where she had once been so happy, looking very wretched, but very handsome, with her brown hair all tangled, while a few tears would well up in spite of her efforts to hide them. Davie could not stand this ; all his resentment and all his lecturing were forgotten in a moment ; he took her in his arms and was almost as ready to cry as she.

“ Now don’t’ee, Maggie dear, don’t’ee anger me so ; let’s make it up ; but it kills love to hear you going on at me as you do, sometimes, in those tempers of yours.”

It’s curious how people occasionally attribute to others exactly the misdeeds of which they have been guilty themselves. Maggie’s tongue was sharp enough no doubt, and her temper none of the smoothest ; but Davie’s lecturing, and attempt at schooling her, was not likely to be very successful in mending matters.

“Kills love, does it? Well, I should say it’s not worth much if it’s killed as easily as all that.”

“Ah, lass, you know little about a man’s love if you don’t know that there’s many a thing he can stand a deal better than being snubbed by the girl he loves.”

“Pooh! you make much of a trifle.”

“It’s not a trifle!” cried Davie impetuously; “such ways of going on just turn everything topsy-turvy. It aggravates a man beyond all endurance, and just makes him hate her. Now, Maggie dear, can’t you say you know you are wrong for once in a way, and then we will be good friends ever after?”

“Why, Davie, you were just as much to blame as I have been—if I have been at all; but I won’t say I have been in the wrong when I don’t think so. I said I wouldn’t, and I won’t.”

At this time they heard the village clock strike eight.

“Oh, poor mother!” cried Maggie, “I must be off; so good night, Davie.”

“Good night,” replied he, but rather sulkily, and so they parted; not by any means to their mutual satisfaction or profit.

END OF VOL. I.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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